THE

SPAEWIFE;

A TALE OF

THE SCOTTISH CHRONICLES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ANNALS OF THE PARISH," "RINGAN GILHAIZE," &c.

"They say—What say they? Let them say.'

ABERDEEN

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I

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THE SPAEWIFE.

CHAP. I.

THIS is the rehearsal of divers events and issues which came to pass in Scotland many years ago. At the time whereof it is intended to speak, King Robert, the second of that name, and the first of the Stuarts, was long gathered to his fathers; but he had left behind heirs and successors, as all monarchs and other great men naturally do, and from them, and out of their pretensions, arose the incidents and matter of this strange and very solemn tale.

It happened, in the lusty years of his juvenility, that the same King Robert had enter-

tained an effectual dalliance with a fair and comely damsel, called Elizabeth, the daugh- of Sir Adam Mure of Rowallan, and by [illegible] had a progeny of sons and daughters. For causes and reasons, but whether of state or of inconstancy is not set forth, neither in th histories of the time nor in the chronicles of the kingdom, this Robert, during the life and reign of his uncle, King David the Second, estranged himself from the gentle Elizabeth Mure; by which great disloyalty on his part, she was stricken with sorrow, and languishing in the solitude of neglect, she drooped her head, and became pale and pining, and died with a heavy sigh.

He afterwards addressed his amorous suspirations to Euphemia Ross, the daughter of the proud and warlike earl of that name, and was to her publicly married, with all the pomps and pageantries befitting the wedding of the heir to the Scottish crown. With this lady he lived several years, and begat,

according to the custom of the age, sons and daughters, of whom Walter, Lord Buchan, and Earl of Atholl, Caithness, and Strathearn, is ordained to act a principal part in this our olden and eventful history.

About the end of King David's reign, the Lady Euphemia Ross being dead, Robert repented of his infidelity towards that sweet and patient gentlewoman, Elizabeth Mure, and acknowledged before the king his uncle that she had been his wedded wife; and that he had procured from his holiness, Pope Clement the Sixth, a dispensation, by which his children by her were legitimated. And when on the death of the king he ascended the throne, the first exercise of his regal authority and princely influence was to procure, by a strong handling of the interests and loyalty of the States of the kingdom, in Parliament assembled, an act of declaration, whereby the children of his first love, Elizabeth Mure, were admitted as his rightful

heirs, and of an elder order than those of the Lady Euphemia Ross.

Thus was the venom of dissension from the beginning instilled as it were into the blood of the princes of the royal house of Stuart, and thus did their progenitor, while intending justice and atonement, work out against his own offspring a machination of prerogative fraught with the seeds of irremediable enmity. Is it therefore to be wondered, that the righteous Heavens, with an unparalleled constancy of displeasure, have continued, through so long a succession of bloody and funereal events, to manifest their judgment on the doomed and guilty race?

But not to expatiate on those old and early crimes, let it suffice to say, that, although during the remainder of King Robert's days, he partook of some calm and consolation in the reflection of having atoned, as far as he then could, to the fair and mild Elizabeth Mure, for the blight he had cast on her fame

and honour in the bloom of her youth and beauty, he had not long departed this life in the ancient castle of Dundonald, when the seed of that fatal policy began to germinate and sprout into effect.

John, the Lord of Kyle and Earl of Carrick, the first-born son of Elizabeth Mure, was, according to the before-mentioned settlement of the order of succession, acknowledged as the heir of the kingdom. But at that era strange and dismal presages having become rife amongst the people, and it appearing that they were too deeply impressed and far-spread for the government to treat as fantastical, he was advised to allow himself to be proclaimed king by the style and title of Robert the Third, in the hope of thereby dispersing those gloomy bodements,—the name of Robert, from the renown and glories of the Bruce's time, and from the peaceful prosperity of his father's reign, being deemed singularly auspicious. The devices of statesmen, however,

could prove of no avail against the decrees of Fate. Sentence had been pronounced on High against the race and generations of the Stuarts, and the revolutions of time have but served to bring to pass the necessary consequences of their direful and irremediable doom.

This third Robert being of an indolent inclination, and infirm of health as of mind, left his brother, the Duke of Albany, in the exercise of the royal power, to which he had been appointed in the latter days of their father,—and this duke, a restless and ambitious man, striving by all expedients and contrivances of policy to make a way for himself to the kingly possession of the throne, so turned the youthful incontinencies of his nephew, the heir to the crown, to the furtherance of the purpose he had in view, that he caused him to perish of hunger in the palace of Falkland,—an occurrence which so moved the grieved and dismayed father, that he sent his next and only son, Prince James,

out of Scotland, to be educated at the French Court, in order that he might be safe from the crafty policy of this ruthless uncle and his other treacherous kinsmen; but in the voyage to France, the young prince was taken by the English and carried a prisoner to London, where he was detained many years.

Meantime Walter, Earl of Atholl, the eldest son which the Lady Euphemia Ross bore to the second Robert, and who, but for the act of settlement by which the pretensions of his mother's offspring were set aside, and preference given to those of Elizabeth Mure, would have succeeded to the crown, remained moody and discontented with his fortunes.

But though the Duke so yearned to be all king, and though the Earl of Atholl repined at the unjust exclusion which, as he conceived, he was suffering from his right, still there was no immediate prospect that either the one would be gratified in his wishes, or the other indemnified for his privations by any

change in the order of succession. For the States of Scotland having assembled in parliament at Perth, on the death of Robert the Third, the right of Prince James was universally acknowledged, and he was accordingly proclaimed king; so that, between Atholl and the throne, the preference given to the sons of Elizabeth Mure was thus again recognised and established by law.

CHAP. II.

When the Estates of the realm had proclaimed Prince James King of Scotland, the Lords, Barons, and Clergy, then assembled at Perth, rose to return to their respective castles and dwellings; and the Earl of Atholl, and the Duke of Albany, who was appointed Regent, together with divers other noblemen of high renown and ancient pedigree, came riding in gallant array, with their intermingled trains, towards that ancient seat of abrogated royalty the Pictish town of Abernethy, where they divided themselves according to the different airts which it behoved them to take

The Regent proceeded with his officers and retinue eastward to his princely residence at Falkland, and the Earl of Atholl courteously bidding him farewell, turned his horse's head

towards Glenphaerg, being minded to pass through the same to Kinross, and thence to Dunfermling, where at the time his lady was then abiding; but, on reaching the entrance of the glen, he found the road had been so damaged by the torrents of the bygone winter, that it was almost impassable. He had, however, set his heart on going that way, and he would not return; so, ordering his men to dismount, he dismounted himself, and giving the bridle to a groom, walked on alone, while the youth led forward the charger before him.

It was then the green and pleasant month of May, when the leaves are bright and the waters clear, and the birds, and bees, and blossoms, and butterflies, are all fluttering in the blitheness of the sunshine. Cheerfulness shone on the foreheads of the mountains, and the valley of Strathern smiled to the gracious Heavens, that were shedding, with a bountiful hand, the treasures of summer into her broad and flowery apron. The stripling pages of

Lord Atholl shouted and clapped their hands, as they startled the mavis and the blackbird from the boughs of the hazel that feathered the steeps of the glen; the men-at-arms whistled and carolled; and the cupbearer, who was too corpulent to dismount, and who had permission from the Earl, on account of his weight and age, to keep the saddle, often, as he travelled up the narrow margin of the noisy brook, snatched a leaf from the overhanging birch, and rubbing it between his thumb and fingers, inhaled the scent, and declared it more delicious than the perfume of the oldest Malvesia.

But their Lord was sullen. His brows were knotted with cogitation; and when the horse, which the groom led before him, paused and looked down from the perilous cornice of a precipice, along which the road lay, seemingly afraid to pass a sharp and jutting rock which, loosened by the thaws of the early spring, had in its fall almost blocked up the passage,

he chided impatiently, and was angry without reason.

"What mak's you so wud at the brave gelding, Lord Atholl?—it's a wise beast," cried a voice from behind the rock; and in the same moment a young woman of a wild and uncouth appearance came into view, stretching out her hand as if to intercept the horse from coming forward.

"Who are you?" said the Earl, surprised at the salutation and the interruption.

"Do ye no ken me, Anniple o' Dunblane? —I thought every bodie kent the Ta'en-awa," replied Anniple, adding,—"When Marion Drummond, the weaver's wife, was brought to bed o' as bonny a lassie-bairn as ever the howdie had in her arms, it was laid in a cradle and happit wi' tow; but when Lucky Fisher gaed in the morning to bring the baby to its mother, she found but me; and they say I'm a benweed that the fairies have dressed in the likeness o' a Christian creature, and left

in the stead o' the weaver's wife's bairn, that they carried away into the fairy-land ayont the seas and aneath the hills. But the fairies have nae power to put heavenly souls intil their effigies, which is the cause, folks say, that I have a want of some o' the seven senses. But stand ye there, Lord Atholl, for I was on my way to seek you."

"Indeed!" said the Earl, smiling compassionately at the rhapsody of the poor creature; "and what is your pleasure, Anniple, with me?"

"A word o' wisdom that should be told in secret. Bid your men bide where they are, and come ye here afore your horse to this hole o' the rock and I'll tell you."

The Earl, almost unconscious of what he did, stepped forward and went round the rock, while the groom, that had hold of his horse by the bridle, waved his hand to those who were behind, and they all halted.

"Well," resumed the Earl, "what have you to tell me?"

"I have dreamt a dream," replied Anniple, raising her hands exultingly, "and it was a' about you, Lord Atholl. O! it was a vision of grandeur. If I had a soul to live, after the weaver's wife's wean dies among the fairies,—for when that happens, and were it to happen even now, ye would see me fall down on the ground forenent you, just a withered benweed;—but I was saying, that had I a soul to be saved, I would na wish to be ta'en into a brighter heaven than I saw in my dream."

"But how came I, Anniple, into your dream?" said Atholl somewhat seriously, "I never saw you before."

"I have seen you though," cried Anniple. "The tower on the hill-head canna be hidden, though a wee bush will scog the poor man's bield."

And what may your dream have been about, to bring you so far in quest of me?"

"Ye'll have to gi'e me something before I

tell you," replied Anniple importantly, tossing back her long matted locks with her right and left hand, and erecting herself into a posture which showed how highly she considered the value of her apocalypse.

Lord Atholl smiled, and taking a purse from his belt, presented her with a piece of silver.

"Another," said she, holding out her hand with the money lying in it.

The Earl drew out another piece, and laid it in her palm.

"Three's aye canny, my Lord," said Anniple, "make it three, or"—

The tone and look with which she said this, still holding her hand stretched out, struck the Earl, and he stood for a moment with his forefinger in the mouth of his purse, evidently surprised, and in some degree daunted.

"A free heart maks a fair fortune," said Anniple; "and if ye get what I bode, ye'll ne grudge me gold."

The Earl dipped his hand into his purse, but having no more silver, he drew it out empty.

Anniple started at the motion, and retiring aside, said, with an offended air—

" Pass on, my Lord Atholl, and let your train pass on. 'It's an ill omen that ye canna make good your purpose."

" I have been fooled," said the Earl to himself; and he called to his groom, Kelso by name, to bring his horse forward; but Anniple laid her right hand on his left arm, and showing him the two pieces of silver, looked sharply in his face as she said—

" Is that a fit largess to one who comes to tell you"—

" What?" exclaimed the Earl eagerly; but in the same moment he flung off the hand with which she held him by the arm.

" Lord Atholl, ' twelve maun dee or I be the laird!' was the song that Sir Lourie

Græme of Dronask sang, when but a page in the hall o' Monteith; and yet, or thirty years were come and gane, he was the laird himsel. How many stand atween you and the crown, Lord Atholl?"

The Earl looked sternly, but made no answer.

"I can tell though ye canna," exclaimed Anniple triumphantly; and she began to count on her fingers the different sons and descendants in the male line of Robert the Second, beginning—

"There's Jamie the Prince, and Robin the Regent, and Murdoch his son, and his sons three—six already,—that's no right, I saw but five."

"'Tis strange!" said the Earl to himself; but his colour fled as he looked at her, where she stood muttering and counting her fingers.

"There were but five," said she,—"but five burials in my dream, before the sparkling

crown was placed upon your head. Oh! pale and wan I thought ye were, and the crown sat so heavy, that drops o' blood fell trickling down your cheeks."

"Kelso, bring forward the horse," cried the Earl sharply, and the groom obeying, he instantly mounted and galloped forward; Anniple, scrambling up the side of the hill, ran wildly towards another obstructed turn of the road, where she knew he must check his speed. There, standing on a ledge of the rock, as he passed under, she clamoured a loud and shrill raving of malaisons till he had the road again free before him, when, as soon as he slackened his rein and plied his rowels, she set up a frantic shout, and hallooed and screamed in an ecstasy after him.

CHAP. III.

When Duke Robert of Albany had been upwards of twelve years sole regent of Scotland, he died at Stirling, and his son Murdoch having succeeded to his lands and honours, was also appointed to succeed him in the government of the kingdom; no heed being taken of the rightful king, who was all that long time languishing in captivity among his natural foemen the English.

The Regent Murdoch was a man much unlike his restless, proud, and ambitious father, who had so long sat the saddle of the state with a slack bridle and a sharp spur, for he was of a remiss and easy nature; and though it could not well be said that he was a doer of ill deeds, yet might it be averred justly, that he permitted them to be done, for

by his indolence crimes were allowed to grow to customs.

Those weak qualities, however, which amounted to vices in his public faculties, were, in the minor duties of his household, such endearing virtues, that his lady loved him with a matchless constancy of affection; and his sons, while they were merry playing boys, could never find a happier sharer of their pranks. So that the castle of Falkland, while the kingdom was rent with feuds and raids, and all the woes that flow from a feeble sceptre in a weak hand, was for many a day the blithest dwelling, high or low, that could be found in any land.

But when the young Lords grew to manhood, they became rude and riotous, little heeding their indulgent father's admonitions, and giving themselves up to those bold vices which made poor Scotland so long weep tears of blood.

Thus was the felicity, which reigned in

the castle of Falkland, put to flight, and the weak and easy Murdoch could only complain to his sympathizing Duchess, of their obstreperous and licentious sons.

But Isabella, Duchess of Albany, the daughter of the Earl of Lennox, was a lady of an august mind, and endowed with an equanimity not easily shaken from its steadfastness. Though a most true and devoted wife, she was not blind to the faults in the public character of her lord, and she urged him to resign the regency, that some firmer hand might curb the disturbers of the kingdom, and restrain the rash and headlong spirit which was taking possession of all the noble youth of the time. Murdoch, however, was averse to this, both from the effort that the act would require, and the dangers which he knew it might bring upon the rights of his family. For, in the event of his resignation, he saw that the Earl of Atholl would naturally be appointed his successor; and, con-

sidering the manner in which that nobleman, and the other royal children by the same mother, had been set aside in the order of succession, he could not doubt that, were he in authority, he would leave no means untried to bastardize the progeny of Elizabeth Mure, at least if King James should happen to die in England. Thus it was, that from selfish purposes, and altogether forgetful of the claims of the people, did this other Stuart put to hazard his own renown, the honour of the state, and the fortunes of his family.

But the turbulence of his sons waxed every day more intolerable, and they set his public and paternal authority alike at nought, in so much that one morning, when he was preparing to take the pastime of hawking on the Lomond-hills, and while Arrow, his favourite falcon, was on his arm, the young Lord Walter requested that he would give it to him; and the Lord James coming up at the moment, also begged to have the bird, and they

quarrelled concerning to whom it should be given, which so chafed their father that he indignantly ordered them to retire, and learn to reverence him better. Whereupon Walter snatched Arrow from his hand, and twisted its neck.

The Regent was not more astonished than grieved at this impious insolence of his son. He looked severely at the two rash youths for a moment without speaking, and the tear rushed into his eyes.

"This," said he, "truly exceeds endurance. Unhappy boys! since you so far forget what is due to your father, I will bring back him that we all must obey."

He then left them in the hall, where they continued for some time reviling each other, and went and forthwith gave orders for the immediate assembling of the States in parliament, in order to move them to consent that the necessary means for the ransom of the King might be taken; in which duty he laboured

with such unwonted earnestness, that in due season the thing was brought to pass; and James, after marrying the Princess Joanna, cousin to the King of England, when hostages were given for the payment of his ransom, was brought home to appease and console his afflicted kingdom.

In the meantime these proceedings on the part of Duke Murdoch had caused great parlance and many controversies of discourse, both in hall and bower, especially in the castle of Atholl, where every thing that bore a tendency to establish the descendants of Elizabeth Mure in the possession of the throne, was considered among the retainers as a wrong done to the rights of the Earl their master. And it happened one evening, that the young Lord Robert Stuart, the Earl's nephew, and presumptive heir, being present with Regulus Menzie, the chaplain, and certain friars, who had come from Dunkeld to partake of the good cheer of the castle, they began to dis-

course of these things, when Father Regulus spoke of the marvellous salutation which his Lord had met with in Glenphaerg from Annipple of Dunblane.

"Though the woman," said Father Regulus, "be seemingly imperfect in her wits, yet hath she acquired great renown for her singular discernment of coming events."

The chaplain, after pausing a short time, as if to recollect something which he could not at once recall to mind, added—

"I am grieved with an exceeding sorrow to observe, that of late my Lord grows slacker in his piety, and credits not those oraculous monitors with the faith he was wont."

"I should not be surprised," replied young Stuart, "that the contempt which the Earl entertains for freats and pretensions to foreknowledge, has arisen from hearing that a creature so ill-assorted in her wits as the Dunblane Spaewife, should be thought entitled to so much homage as it is said she

receives for her predictions from the commonalty."

"Be counselled by me," rejoined the churchman, "and let not your noble uncle shake your religious faith. The wonderful Heavens often achieve their greatest purposes by the most simple means. Though the oracles of wisdom do not always appear to the incapable judgment of men commensurate to the revelations which they declare, yet are they not the less worthy of our reverential belief. I have myself known manifold instances of the most marvellous verification of those unheeded truths, which, from time to time, the mysterious Heavens, in their dark workings, cause to be published, the wherefore no man can tell, nor why it is that the organs which declare them are, by the abject condition of their human faculties, seemingly so unmeet.

"Once, in my younger years, I happened to be in the hall of Dirlton, when the Lord was

trying on a new surcoat. The tailor, with his prentice, were standing by, and the prentice was a famished and ghostly-looking creature, with big blue eyne, more like the dull mindless blobs of a dead man's head than the windows of a living spirit. He had a mouth that was as a penance in a charnel-house to behold, and there was an altogetherness of horror and simplicity about the lad very strange and dismal to see.

"Dirlton being very vogie of his brave garb, shewed it to his lady, pressing the doublet into fitting as he gambolled in his jocularity with her, when suddenly the prentice, who was so standing by with the shears in his hand, having no respect to the Earl's degree, cried, 'For God sake! put off that coat, as ye wish to live. O! lady, as ye love my Lord, let it never be on him!'

"'What for would ye not have me to wear this gallant coat?' replied Dirlton, marvelling at the wild creature's panic; 'I never

had a braver on my shoulders.' But the poor ashy-faced boy slunk away behind his master, for the mystical spirit had left him.

"The lady was however frightened, and going towards the lad, craved to know wherefore he had made such an unearthly outcry; and, after a time, the trembling thing declared that he saw a bloody dirk sticking in the skirt of the surcoat. On hearing which, the Lady Dirlton controlled her Lord to put it from him, and he gave it to Sir David de Hepburne; and the very next night, when Sir David was going from the castle to North Berwick, in the glimpse of the setting moon, some secret enemy of the Earl stabbed him in the side; aye, just where the tailor's prentice thought he saw the bloody rent o' the visionary dagger. Now, this I was an eye-witness to, Lord Robert, myself, and surely there was nothing about the wit and judgment o' that vapoury and fantastical creature, to make a man have any faith in his foreknowledge."

The young Lord listened, with the look of one more afraid than believing, at this recital; which Father Regulus noticing, added—

"Nay, my Lord, I can tell you something still more wonderful and not less true. I knew a man, by name Alisner Ballingall, a skipper, who, being driven with his vessel, by stress of weather, into a port in the Macdonalds' Isle, when he was coming round to Dundee wi' a cargo of Cordovan leather and sack-sherries from Hispania, lay wind-bound there many a weary day, in so much that his thoughts began to languish for his home and hearth."

"Well," said Stuart, who was hearkening as one who hears a tale told of some helpless man in great jeopardy, "what happened?"

"One day," replied Father Regulus, "as he was standing on the shore very disconsolate, looking wistful over the stormy sea, an old Highland carle, that could speak but little of our Christian tongue, came to him with

bare feet, and a plaid gathered round him—'What will ye give me,' said that wild seer to Ballingall, 'and I'll tell you what ye're wishing to see?' Whereupon the melancholious skipper proffered him a bodle, and the old man then laid his hand upon his, and presently he saw the inside of his own house on the shore of Dundee, and his wife lying in her bed, and his gudemother weeping, with a new-born bairn on her knee, and he saw that his wife was dead!"

"That was indeed wonderful," said Stuart.

"Yes, and no less so than true; for when he came home, more than a month after, he was told, to his deep affliction, that on the same day, about the same hour that he had seen the vision, his loving wife had died in giving him a son.

"Let none, my Lord, tell you, therefore, how these things may not be; for that such preternatural shows are made to the eyes of men and women, and in forms seemingly most

palpable, is to me out of all doubt, and that effects follow answerable thereto is as little questionable.

"When I was in my novitiate at Cambuskenneth, we had a servitor of a solitary humour, who, during the harvest time, warded in the barn, and nightly slept there. One morning he told the Abbot that he could not any longer abide in his service, for that he had several times seen a dead corpse in its winding-sheet straightened beside him as he lay alone in the barn. By which tale the Abbot was so moved, and on account of the great trepidation of the man, that he forthwith discharged him. On the following year, however, when the man's dismay had passed off, he, being delivered from his fears, came back to us and was again hired for the harvest; but one day he fell from a stack of corn that he was helping to build, and being sorely hurt, he was taken to the barn and laid on the spot where he had formerly slept, and there soon

after he expired; the vision he had seen being thereby clearly proven to have been a warning to himself."

"That we may have some inward intimation of the time of our own end," said Stuart, "is not to be questioned, but sights and knowledges of things concerning others, and for no plain cause, is matter that may well be contested."

"Say not so, my Lord; I redde ye give not yourself up to such perilous incredulity," exclaimed Father Regulus. "Have you not heard the story of Sir William de Lyone's page; when his master was embarking at Dundee with the Earl of Wigton for the service of the French king, Charles VI.? An old demented woman, that made her living by seeking her bread, and was not regarded as in her right mind, came to Sir William and said, 'Waes me, Sir Knight, hae ye nae better cleeding for that winsome bairn than a winding-sheet?' which made Sir William to laugh, for

the page was very gaily apparelled. But scarcely had the bark put to sea when the page fell sick, and the very day she cast anchor on the French land he was laid in his grave.

"I could give many more proofs as incontestable as all these, but I think what is said is enough to prove that there are mysteries in and about us, which are not the more to be questioned because they cannot be expounded; and I marvel and admire, that wise men, and men of lore and gifts should be so shy to believe that there are any visions of the kind whereof I have spoken. For what is more certain, than that good and bad angels have communed with the inhabitants of the earth? Was it not evil spirits that presented visions and audible voices to the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Ahab, and the four hundred prophets of the groves? And surely it is as easy to work upon one sense as upon another—upon the sight as upon the hearing; and we know from the story of Saul and the

Witch of Endor, that necromancers and magicians themselves have not only seen shapes and forms, but likewise have allowed others to see the same of beings superior and beyond their art.

"I do remember that, many years ago, there was an aged women in Auchtertool, who was accustomed to give very oraculous responses, and who averred, that she had been dead, her soul translated, and allowed to return from the other world. I questioned her myself, as to what she had witnessed there, and she told me that she had seen her daughter, who had died about a year before. That woman was, as I learnt from her own children, liable at times to fall into a syncope; and when questioned, as she lay in that state, concerning things yet in the depths of the future, she was instructed what response to make, on recovering, by pictures seen in her trance, of the things that were to be, even as they would visibly come to pass."

Father Regulus would peradventure have continued to speak farther of these marvels of nature, and of the incommunicable intelligence which some persons are enabled to hold with the world of spirits, but Stuart interrupted his descant by saying—

"Then you do think that this same Spaewife, whereof we were discoursing, may possess the power of discerning what is coming to pass, though, as the Earl says, she lacks in the concord of the ordinary senses?"

"It were impious to doubt it," replied the Father, "in the face of so many accomplished predictions. But"——

What he would have added is unknown, for the young Lord became very thoughtful, and soon after retired from the recess of the hall where this discourse had taken place; and when he was gone, Father Regulus replenished the flagon for the solace of his pious visitors from Dunkeld.

CHAP. IV.

NEXT morning, by break of day, Stuart was mounted, and was, with but a single groom, on the road to Dunblane, to consult Anniple the Ta'en-away concerning his future fortunes. On reaching the town, which he did early the day following, conceiving himself unknown there, he inquired freely for her dwelling at a band of children whom he saw playing in the street; and they conducted him to the back of the Abbey church-yard wall, where they pointed to a hovel constructed of sticks laid loosely against it, and rudely covered with turf and straw,—a grousum den for a human creature.

" There," said a boy, " ye'll see her sitting like a clocking hen, wi' a wee de'il in the shape o' a green-e'et cat on the one side, and a

muckle black ane like a kankry colley-dog on the ither."

The children then ran off as if they had been terrified; and Stuart dismounting, gave his horse to his groom, and walked alone to the hovel, from which, as he approached, a colley-dog, to all appearance in voice and gesture, came ragingly forth, and seemed, for a time and season, resolved to debar him from advancing nearer towards his mistress; who hearing the barking, and having a sentiment therefrom that a stranger was coming, looked out, and commanded the dog to be still; which it not only forthwith was, but ran back towards her in a very cowed and remarkable manner.

Stuart, seeing the way thus cleared, went boldly forward and beheld Annipple sitting under her inclement shed, with her limbs deep buried among straw, and a ragged blanket drawn shiveringly over her head and round her unclad body. As he came forward, she

began to laugh in an eldritch manner, and to chatter with her teeth; a joy whereof to witness the outward demonstration was to endure a sight that may not be pictured.

"Hey, Robin Stuart," she exclaimed, "ye has come far afield the day to get your fortune spae't. For ony gude that I can tell you, ye might just as weel hae bidet wi' the auld de'il's bargain in the towers of Atholl. He'll rue the day he didna pay me for the braw dream I dreamt for him."

Stuart stood aghast to find that she knew him so well, and was almost afraid to look at the malicious satisfaction with which she enjoyed the anticipation of some ill fortune that was hatching for his uncle. The solemnity of his dread was also enhanced, by the way in which she seemed to recollect the incident that had so provoked her spleen, notwithstanding the long period which had elapsed. He wished, at the moment, that he had never come near her, and was on the

point, of returning to his horse, when she looked up to him with a peculiar glance of her eye, that fixed him to the spot.

"Ye'll no gang away, Robin Stuart; it's no me that ye need to fear,—there's a winsome dame in a bonny bower that 'ill maybe wise you to mair wae;" and then she began to sing—

> "Gae scour the silver basin,
> And scour it bright and fine,
> For it maun kep the gentle blood,
> That's red red like the wine."

The very spirit of Stuart was frozen by her dismal cadence. At the conclusion she again looked up at him with the corner of her eye and laughed, crouching her shoulders fainly, and rubbing her hands as she said—

"But birl your bodles, Robin Stuart, or ye'll get nae spaeing frae me."

Stuart, scarcely aware of what he did, took his purse from his belt and flung it into her lap. She snatched it with a childish shriek

of glee; and pouring the contents into her hand, flourished the empty purse round her head as it were in triumph. She then counted the money, and finding an odd piece, she paused, and said to herself, "That's no canny."

Then she restored the money into the purse, and gave it to the dog, and he immediately carried it into the far corner of the hovel and lay down.

After a short pause, during which she looked steadily at Stuart, the tear shot into her eye, and she began to weep and sob, saying to herself, with her hands clasped,—

"He's a braw lad, o' a leil nature. Tyke, bring back the siller."

The dog instantly returned and laid down the purse on her lap.

"Hae, Robin Stuart," said she; "take back your bodles,—I'll spae no fortune to you;" and holding up the purse, she sang with a wild and careless freedom—

"And Lazarus deed, and Dives fell sick,
O, a sick sick man was he,
And he said to Death,—'O, winsome Death,
'A' my goud and my gear I will gi'e,
'Gin ye'll but taste yon physic cup,
'Sweet Death, and let me be.'"

Dives wanted Death to take the physic, that he might grow better, but Death took him away to the ill place, Robin Stuart. It's well for me I have nae soul to be flesh for the de'il's brimstane broth."

Stuart shuddered.

"Take back your purse," said Anniple again.

"Nay, it is yours. I have given it, and it must abide with you," replied Stuart.

"Then, Tyke, take it ben the house again."

The dog obeyed, and his mistress began to churme in a musical manner to herself, and to toss the straws which covered her lap, first with the fore-finger of the left hand, and syne with the similar finger of her right, taking no

farther heed of the young prince, who stood wondering and fearful beside her.

After the lapse of several minutes, she looked up and said, "Are ye aye there yet, Robin Stuart?" and then, seemingly wholly occupied with her own fancies, she turned from side to side, pulling here and there a straw, and twirling it, as she sung:

"O waes me! O waes me! O waes me, Mary!
I had a joe, and he loved me weel,
And he danced at Castle Cary,——
But his rosy cheek, rosy cheek, rosy cheek, Mary,
And the blithe blue eyne that won my heart
Lie buried at Castle Cary."

"Were I to guess by your reluctance, and these snatches of old ditties," said Stuart, "what you could tell is, that I am to be short-lived. Now, as I hope never to account life a thing that a true man should set any store by, say if I shall prosper as a lover?"

Anniple smiled and replied,—"There's nae doubt about that;" and she added signi-

ficantly, "if the lady's kind:" in a moment after she subjoined with solemnity, "Your fortune hangs upon a maiden's honesty."

"But how? in what way?" cried Stuart eagerly. Anniple, however, instead of making him any answer, took up the corner of the blanket which hung about her shoulders, and began to imitate the gestures of one busily sewing.

"Ye see," said she, "that I'm very thrang; my kirtle needs clouting; dinna fash me ony mair wi' your speerings."

"Why have you told me so much, since you refuse to tell me more?" exclaimed Stuart impatiently.

"O weel, weel," replied Anniple peevishly, come when that poor silly shavling gabbit body Duke Murdoch has got his reward, and then maybe I'll hae mair time for clavers."

"When Duke Murdoch has got his reward! What do you mean?"

Instead, however, of making any reply, she

called her dog, and began to caress him, saying, "My kind messin,—my brave messin, that barks awa the ill-deedy brats that pelt me wi' stanes;" and she turned up the corner of her eye towards Stuart, and laughing immoderately, said, "I redde ye, Robin Stuart, hae mense—hae mense, for Tyke can bite."

"The creature's insane, a mere born-fool," said Stuart angrily to himself, and was moving away;—but before he had left the hovel ten or twelve paces, she started out, and drawing the blanket-mantle close around her with one hand, she ran after him, and seized him by the skirt of the surcoat with the other, addressing him with a soft and earnest solicitude,—

"There's a cross and cloud in thy lot, Robin Stuart,
There's a light in a bower to beguile, Robin Stuart;
There's deaths ane and three,—and a ship on the sea;
But the flower in the ha' I would fain wise awa',
For the dule it will bring upon thee, Robin Stuart."

The slow and tender pathos with which she

delivered this mystical jargon, moved him to regard her with a compassionate contrition, and he said, with much gentleness in his voice,

"Poor thing; it is ill to redd thy ravelled fancies; but I will order thee to be better heeded hereafter."

"It's kindly thought and softly said," replied Anniple; "but who should care for me? When the fairies made me up o' a benweed, and laid me among the tow for the weaver's wife's bonny lassie bairn, I was a thing made to suffer aversion. Therefore it is that all Christian creatures hate me;—that folks flee frae the sight o' me;—that wives draw in their weans and shut their doors when I gang by;—that I maun eat beans frae the shawp, and corn frae the stalk;—that the wicked rain pursues me, and the cruel hail pelts me;—that the cold wind bites me, and the fire-flaughts flash on me. There was a wee white lambie playing beside its mother,

on a bonny green knowe. It was an innocent thing, and I thought it looked kindly at me, which never man nor womankind had done; but when I gaed to warm it in my arms, it too was frightened, and ran bleating away. All living creatures see and ken, that I'm a thing the holy Heavens had no hand in the making o'. I wish that the weaver's wife's wean were dead in the fairy-land, that I might lie on the loan what I am, a weed to be trampled on."

Stuart was melted to sadness by the wailing simplicity of this complaint of her abject estate; for though he could never think that a creature with so much sweet blood in her bosom, was a thing so fantastical as she reported herself to be, he was yet so filled with awe and strange wonderment by her prophetic breathings, that he could not but own she had qualities above the common faculties of the human world, and was indeed a being conceived in some mysterious eclipse of nature.

He stood in consequence doubtful and irresolute what to say or do; but she relieved him speedily from his perplexity, by darting away, and huddling herself down beneath the litter in her hovel.

CHAP. V.

During the regencies of the two Dukes of Albany, particularly in the time of Murdoch, the domains belonging to the crown had been squandered among the upholders of their unrighteous administration, in so much that King James, not less resenting this traitorous prodigality than his brother's cruel death, and the long neglect he had suffered in being left a captive with the English, did, among the first acts of his royal freedom, procure from the States in parliament a law to inquire what lands had belonged to the crown in the time of King David the Second, and to call on those who possessed them to show their charters.

The knights and barons who were of the

faction of the house of Albany, being alarmed at the vigour with which the King showed himself determined to carry this law into effect, consulted together, and, by dint of fears for himself, and the representations of his partizans, Murdoch was persuaded to form a league with a strong host of those who were participators in the spoliation of the crown, to oppose the execution of the law. This confederacy being divulged to the King, his Majesty was so offended thereat, that, disregarding the turbulent temper of those irascible and daring chiefs, he ordered many of them to be arrested, and summoned a parliament to meet forthwith at Perth, with a view to higher purposes.

This bold enterprise for a Scottish King to undertake in that age of anarchy, was promulgated on the morning of the same day on which Stuart went to consult the Spaewife; so that, after he had parted from her in the manner rehearsed, and had re-

mounted and returned to the highway, he was surprised to meet horsemen coming in great haste from Scone, where the Court then was, and the whole country become as it were alive with wonder and conjecture at the sound and sight of such unwonted energy in the government.

Stuart, a brave and gallant youth, knew too well, both from chronicle and tale, that such speed in the emissaries of the King betokened no prosperity to some of the princely nobles; and fearing, on account of the jealousy with which all the descendants of Euphemia Ross were regarded by those of Elizabeth Mure, that the storm might light on the house of Atholl, to which he was the presumptive heir, instead of returning to Atholl-castle, he clapped spurs to his horse, and went to Perth, where he soon learned what the King had done, and what his royal indignation was kindled against the faction of the house of Albany. It entered, however, neither into his imagination, nor into that of any

other, that aught was then meditated against Duke Murdoch himself, the King's uncle, nor against the three princes his sons, and therefore was he none displeased to hear the news, since the object of the King's wrath seemed to be only to check the arrogance of a faction, by which the power of the house of Atholl could not fail to be necessarily strengthened; and being likewise informed that his uncle, the Earl of Atholl, was expected at Scone, he resolved to await his coming.

The Earl of Atholl was a subtle and long forecasting man, shrewd, sententious, and well skilled in the pliancies of worldly wisdom, moreover, he had the gift of an enticing and urbane demeanour, which, from the first interview, had won upon his nephew the King, who, both for affection therefrom, and his deep insight of men and business, trusted him with an entire confidence.

When the Earl arrived at Perth, he carried Stuart with him to Scone, and for the first

time introduced him to his royal kinsman, who, seeing him in the morn of manhood, and of a bold and princely carriage, was instanter moved to treat him with much courtesy. From that day he became his Majesty's favourite companion in all hardy pastimes and the adventures of hawking and hunting, but he was not taken into his councils; for King James, though still but a young man himself, conferred in his royal office only with ancient and grave men, sage from experience, and of an austere and reserved wisdom,—not that he questioned the discretion of his kinsman, albeit there were those who accused Stuart of dissimulation and hollowness of heart. But if the King had indeed any discernment of these defects, he assuredly considered them rather as faults of nature, which no man can amend, than sins of carriage, which by virtue may be overcome.

In the meantime Duke Murdoch, with Isabella his Duchess, and two of their sons,

Alexander and James, were abiding in the stately towers of Falkland, little dreading or dreaming of the cloud that was gathering over them,—which, from their alliancies among the nobles of their faction, haply they might consider as a thing which could never be. The two young lords were indeed reckless of destiny, and pursued their own headstrong courses, as if the King was still a prisoner among his enemies, and their indulgent father still the irresponsible Regent of the realm.

But it came to pass, that on the day when the King had in such sudden haste summoned the Earl of Atholl to Scone, some hint of what was meditated against the confederated nobles arrived at Falkland, which so exasperated those two fierce princes, that they vowed vengeance against the King if he resolved to persist in his English methods of government; for so, like all of their faction, they called his Majesty's bold and impartial justice,—the which to hear caused alarm to their mother,

and she strove in vain, with all her kind counselling, to appease their rebellious menaces.

"The King," said she, "is a just man, and though in weeding this poor realm, which has almost run to waste, he may in his great task pull corn away with the tares, still his endeavour deserves the praise of all good men, and it would well become you, my dear sons, who are the nearest Princes of his blood, to honour and assist his noble undertaking."

"Would you," exclaimed the Lord James, "have us, who are so near to him in blood, truckle to him like base hinds?"

"No," replied the Duchess, "but I cannot deny to myself, that I fear ye have done many things which it may not stand easy with so righteous a ruler to pardon, and, therefore, I crave you to give him at least no new nor greater cause of offence."

"You feel not, mother," said the Lord Alexander, "in this as the Duchess of Albany

should—see ye not that his vengeance is directed all against our friends?"

These harsh words smote the Duchess to the heart, and tears rushed into her eyes as she said with much fervour—

"Headstrong and irreverent boys, get ye hence, and learn the homage that is due to your Prince and to your parent. What but your father's power, and that rank which makes you so bold in your wild courses, has protected you from the avenging law? Do you forget that the Duke is no longer Regent?"

While she was thus reproaching them for their unfilial behaviour, Duke Murdoch himself came hastily into the room with letters in his hand; his face was pale and his limbs trembled, and a flush, betokening as much of sorrow as alarm, was on his cheek.

"Now," he cried, "ye intemperate spirits, now shall ye prove the difference between a king and a father."

"What has befallen us?" said the Duchess, moderating the agitation with which, but a minute before, she had been so shaken.

"Their brother Walter," replied the Duke with a sigh, "has been this morning arrested, and sent a prisoner to the Bass."

The two young princes looked at each other,—their mother for some time was unable to speak, but at last, giving a deep sigh, she laid her hand upon her Lord's, and said—

"Alas, Murdoch! these are not tidings which should make us renew the quarrels of our hearth.—O hasten with what speed you can to the King; make all submission. Go, my dear sons, go with your father, and by your humility disarm the force of the blast that so threatens to break us down."

"What," exclaimed the Lord James, "would you have us drop like fascinated larks into the adder's mouth?"

The afflicted Duchess, at hearing this, and seeing her two sons conferring together with

fierce and resolute countenances, began to wring her hands and to pace the floor, and weep very bitterly, crying—

"O! my prophetic heart has long foreseen all this," and turning to the Duke, who was standing very disconsolately ruminating, with the letters in his hand, she said with a pathetic but reproachful voice—"O thou rash Jephthah, by thy vow to recall the King, behold our dear Walter must be sacrificed—O the terrible justice of this King; it will make me a childless mother!"

The old afflicted father looked at her, and shook his grey head, as he said—

"Alas! Isabella, how often did you urge me to get the King recalled, and how much did you rejoice when the States ratified the treaty for his ransom, the very act that deprived me of the power to protect our children!"

"My joy," replied the Duchess, still grievously weeping, "was without reason! Oh! it

has proved but an omen of woe. It was a light like that false morning which dawns in the north, and is never followed by any day, but only with storms and calamities."

"Come with me," said Duke Murdoch, turning in sorrow from the Duchess, "let us go to Scone, and do what we can to appease the displeasure of the King."

"Were you Regent of Scotland," cried Lord James, "and will you cringe and be spurned?"

Lord Alexander was however touched by the extreme misery of his mother, and said he would accompany his father; which so exasperated the choler of his brother, that he cried hoarsely with rage.

"Do as you will, spaniel, but my resolution is taken;" and with that he quitted the room, and mounting his horse, immediately left the castle. Scarcely was he gone, when there arose a great cry and panic in the court,

which for a moment caused a pause in the lamentations of the Duchess.

"What has happened?" cried the Duke from a window; but before he received any answer, the warder of the castle and several officers rushed into the room. The Duchess saw that some dreadful thing had come to pass; and gathering all her strength, she dried her tears, and calmly inquired the cause of their alarm.

"A herald," replied the warder, "has come from Scone, and is now at the gate demanding admittance and the surrender—"

His tongue faltered, and he could not add more.

"What does he demand?" cried the Lord Alexander.

"His Grace, yourself, and the Lord James, as prisoners accused of high treason."

"Then let the wall be instantly manned," cried the young Lord, with the bravery of

youth, "it is a new thing for a Scottish noble to be seized like a thief."

"No," said the Duchess majestically, "it shall not be so; ye shall submit yourself to the King's mercy, for ye need it. Sir warder, admit the herald."

"Yes," said Murdoch, with a dignity that he seldom seemed to possess; and turning to the herald, who at that moment was ushered in, he added, "Keith, we will not resist the royal authority—we submit ourselves to you."

But the Lord Alexander still waxed more wroth and indignant, and rushing towards the herald, would have wrested the baton from his grip. The Duchess, however, again interposed, and bade her Lord and son farewell, with a serenity that was more sorrowful than tears or lamentations.

The two princes, father and son, were then taken away prisoners. The Duke was carried to Carlaverock castle, and the Lord Alexander to Stirling, where, on the same day, the Earl of

Lennox, father to the Duchess, was likewise brought in a prisoner, accused of the same treason.

CHAP. VI.

At the time when the displeasure of the King went forth against the house of Albany and all its adherents, Sir Robert Græme, who had partaken largely of the lands whereof the crown had been despoiled, was likewise arrested, and sent to Stirling castle.

This Græme was a man of a stout heart, proud in temper, fearless in battle, and of an arm most puissant, both with sword and lance. Moreover, he was of a doure countenance, and a rude and robust frame; in lith and limb for strength a giant: but withal frank; and though in his nature ruthless as steel, yet was he not without a bravery, which won the largess of much laud from the

courageous commonalty, who, liking the bold port of valiant men, take little note of their private defects.

But yet, notwithstanding his soldierly virtues, and a spirit which danger could not dismay, Sir Robert Græme was the thrall of an ungovernable revenge, and whosoever did him any wrong, or caused him to think he had suffered, his wrath burnt against them with a fierceness so unquenchable, that it could only be slockened with the blood of their life. Still in him revenge did not work with its accustomed cunning, but wore, in sooth, so much of the gallantry of heroism in the openness of its menace, that his adversary had never reason to say that he was not fairly dared, as became the knighthood of the challenger.

The main occasion which led the King to incarcerate this bold bad man, with so many others of renown and weight in the state, for not fewer, it is chronicled, than twenty gentle-

men of great ancestry and power were at the same time committed to durance, was his rebellious disregard to the Sheriff's claim to view the charters, by which he held the lands that he had obtained during the misrule of Duke Murdoch's regency, and which had formerly appertained to the crown. Seeing, however, the resolution with which King James was determined to enforce his authority, Græme dissembled the ire that was kindled in his spirit, and acquiesced, in conjunction with some of the other prisoners, so far as to consent to show his charters, and to trust to his Majesty's grace, that for this submission, the grants would not be revoked. By this policy he was set at liberty; but though permitted to enjoy his lands, he could not abide the thought of being so in the King's power, neither could he forgive his imprisonment, though but the penalty of his denial to do what the law required. Accordingly he bent all his thoughts, with the wonted sternness of his

character, to achieve some great indemnification from the King.

Meanwhile the Lord James Stuart, who had so opportunely escaped from the castle of Falkland, when his father and brother were arrested, had passed with the utmost speed of horse to Balloch castle, in Lennox, the stronghold of his maternal grandfather, where he found Finlay, Bishop of Argyle, with many of the Earl of Lennox's friends and retainers, assembled to defend the castle against the King's power, which, from the imprisonment of their chief and master, they expected would be sent to take possession.

Bishop Finlay had been raised by the patronage of Duke Murdoch to the dignity which he then held, but less for his lore and piety than for other qualities, which were thought in that age to be of an account as good in the management of the Highland schores. Being, therefore, so much beholden to the house of Albany, and on terms of strict amity

with the Earl of Lennox, he gave the Lord James a better welcome than good cheer. Not that there was ever any lack in that particular, where a bishop had obtained a howff; and to speak the verity of Bishop Finlay, he was without question a blithe and hearty priest, of a jocose countenance, somewhat carbuncled with the rubies of a jovial temperament. Well read he was in the virtues of all sort of wines, and he could tell by his rosarie, whether Rumney or Malmesyne was best in cold weather; that Hippocras was excellent in a frosty night; and that Vernage from Vernon, in Touraine, was a sovereign remedy against the east wind; that Algrade was a Spanish liquor of good substance and flavour; how Bastarde was brewed from dry raisins and water, and not being the legitimate offspring of the grape, was therefore so called; that Ruspice and Pyment were also of doubtful parentage, and that honey added to spice made the difference of a cousinship between

them. Often did he expatiate on the cordiality of Muscadell; and Grenada pleasant to ladies' lips; and how Claret and Rochelle, when of prime vintages, were medicaments well known to the physicians about the court, and not ill to take by churchmen, who, like himself, were martyrs to abstinence. Whethr Bishop Finlay was as well skilled in the miracles of the Saints, the Lord James Stuart was not at any time of a curiosity to search uncivilly.

Being then a fugitive, and in some measure daunted by what he had heard in his journey, concerning the strong grip that the King had taken of his royal sceptre against the friends of his father, the young Lord approached the castle of Balloch with a dolorous aspect, which even the heartiness of the welcome did not soon brighten.

The Bishop seeing him so dejected and moody, instead of conducting him at once into the hall, carried him by the turret-stair

into an upper chamber, where, when they were within and the door bolted, he said—

"Be not overly cast down, my young Lord, the friends and vassals of Lennox, your valiant grandfather, need but the word to spring; and I have this day with me some of the bravest gentlemen in the shire: it cannot be that they will brook to see so many nobles of honourable pedigree called to show by what charters they have made new conquests. What's this English-bred King that he should trouble us in our possessions? Touch my land, take my life. No, no, my Lord, it must not be endured, that King James shall be allowed to play these pranks with our Scottish rights. God's wounds! if he be free to question the charters of the nobility, and to bring the estates of honest men into skaith and jeopardy, the Church itself is not safe."

This stout speech heartened the Lord James, and he began to confer with the

Bishop about sending forth emissaries without delay, to warn the vassals of the Earl of Lennox to be in readiness to take the field.

"It will fire the blood of every true Scot," exclaimed the bold churchman, "to hear of such provocation. Your father, the first Prince of the blood-royal—your two brothers—the nearest kin of the King himself, to be all proclaimed traitors! There is not a free sword in Scotland that will not rattle in the scabbard at the sough of such tidings. King James is fey, and will soon meet his fate. He only proves by these rash doings, that he can but ill carry a full cup. From a prison to a palace, what can he know of ruling? And of ruling too the bold barons of Scotland. But our nobles are not used to be so snooled. They may thole for a little, but sooner or later their old hardihood will break out. It is not possible that he will dare—"

The Bishop checked himself, leaving the sentence unfinished, struck, perhaps, with the

improbability of the dreadful idea which had so inadvertently risen; but the Lord James caught the thought, and said anxiously—

"Why, if he dare imprison for such causes, and we see what he has done, he will not scruple to do more."

"There is then the more reason," cried the Bishop, "that we should not be slack. This very night let your summonses be sent to the vassals and friends of the family. Come, let us at once consult with those who are below in the hall. It will do your heart good to hear how they condemn the parchment government of this English-bred King. Courage, my Lord!"

So saying, Bishop Finlay, with the valour of a veteran, clapped the Lord James with a friendly familiarity on the back; for he had been tutor to him and his two brothers when chaplain in the castle of Falkland.

CHAP. VII.

The hall, where the guests and retainers, together with the Bishop's servants, were assembled, was like a darksome cave: the ponderous beams and rafters, all carved with marvellous imagery, were sustained on the knotted heads of huge trunks of oak trees; a gaunt and cavernous fire-place was on the left-hand side, a roaring fire of roots and faggots and piles of peat, sent a red and fierce light on the faces of sundry old bare-legged carles, who were standing before it warming themselves, holding up their huge hands to screen their faces, which they averted from the heat, grinning in a savage guise, because of the reek that, from time to time, was blown into their faces by puffs of wind

that entered from an air-hole at the back of the fire.

At the upper end of the hall there was a platform which rose some three or four steps above the floor; a door opened on the right and left hand of the same, and far in a recess, between the two doors, was a spacious window, whereon was emblazoned, with many cunning devices, all manner of heraldry and honourable augmentations of arms, very wonderful to see. At the lower end, over the door, was a brave gallery, in the front of which hung shields and swords; and on pinnacles, that rose towards the ceiling, were placed coats of mail and helmets in royal array, well befitting the ancient hall of a warlike Earl. In this gallery, on high times and great festivals, bards and musicants were wont to solace the guests banquetting below.

One of the two doors, before spoken of, led to the towers and strength of the place, by many a winding bout of stair and lobby-

rinth, through strong chambers and abysses, hollowed in the walls for secrecy and stratagem; the other door opened into a fair and spacious room, and thence into the gallery, by which the Bishop was conducting the Lord James.

"Stop," said Bishop Finlay, as he passed from the gallery into the room between it and the hall. "Pause you here till I have announced your arrival at the board, and claimed for you the courtesies due to a son of Albany and of Lennox."

The Lord James at these words halted, and the Bishop going forward entered the hall, shutting the door behind him.

It was a new thing for the uncurbed spirit of that young prince to stand so in the reverence of a reception; it was indeed only the amaze of the moment at the Bishop's request that made him pause; for no sooner was the door shut than his blood mounted, and he strode forward with a proud and indignant

step, as if to vindicate the equivocation done to his royal birth and knightly bravery.

But as he laid his hand upon the door to pull it open, the sound of a rustle and murmur in the hall made him recoil, and he again halted. A deep silence then ensued, and presently the voice of one speaking aloud was heard; but the thickness of the oaken door, gnarled with knobs of iron, so deafened the sound, that he could neither discern whose voice it was, nor the theme of the speaker. For a moment he bent forward to listen; but his pride soon checked him, and with a haughty heart he turned on his heel and walked out of the room, and went into the gallery, flinging the door scornfully behind him. He was not, however, long permitted to remain alone stepping the gallery with stately strides; for in the course of a few minutes he heard a rushing in the room next the hall, and, in the same moment, the door that led into the gallery was thrown open

wide to the wall, and several armed men, with fierce looks, came struggling, as it were with one another, who should be the first to enter.

The Lord James, who was then at the farther end of the gallery, on beholding this boisterous endeavour for precedence, and not knowing whether it portended homage or harm, laid his hand on the hilt of his sword, and placed himself in a posture of defence. But, before the intruders could reach him, the Bishop also entered the gallery, and called to him with a cheerful shout to receive his friends. For so it was. On being informed that he was in the castle, and on what errand he had come, they all with one accord started from their seats, each more eager than the other, to proffer his life and vassals to assist the fugitive Prince in vindicating the wrongs done to his house by King James.

When they had on bended knee presented their swords to the Prince, in token of their

resolution to follow his banner to the uttermost, Bishop Finlay expounded to them what the Lord James would have said.

After this ceremonial of homage and tender of lives and fortunes, the which was done with more sincerity than ever the like proffer was made either by provost and town-council of borough town, or by chapter of churchmen convened on purpose, they all went back to the hall; and when the Lord James entered, preceded by the Bishop, and followed by the chieftains, there was, for joy, a skirling and screaming of bagpipes, dreadful to hear and wonderful to tell, as if the vehement pipers had each aneath his arm some desperate beast of prey, in the pangs and anguish of being squeezed to death.

The Lord James being seated on the right hand of the Bishop, a merled horn with a silver brim was set before him, and a mapple cup, adorned with Brabant carving, was also set before the Bishop, and there was like-

wise placed between them a pewter guardevine of Cypress bawme, the fragrant scent whereof was, of itself, as Bishop Finlay said, a regale fit for a Cardinal. The chieftains sat at the same board on the platform with the Prince and the Bishop; and from time to time the Prince filled his merled horn with the Cypress bawme, and gave it to the chieftains, and their hearts were warmed in an unspeakable manner towards him.

And because of the great honour which was vouchsafed to all present, by the appearance of a prince of the blood royal at Balloch, the Bishop bade the Earl's chaplain, Friar Eric of Toppermoray, to cause three of the twelve butts of old ale that were in the cellar, and which he called the Twelve Apostles, to be broached, and furnished to those who were sitting at the table in the body of the hall; whereby there was soon such a foaming overflow of their spirits, that the obstreperous din of the bagpipes was only heard skirling

at intervals amidst the cataract of noises and exultation. The mirth continued to wax still more and more eager, in so much, that at last the vassals rose in pairs, and began to show the Prince how they would fight his battles.

First they passed one another briskly, looking sternly, each measuring the strength of his adversary. Then two and two faced, and both at the same moment began to spurn the ground in a most animated manner, which showed that their rage was kindling. Then the pipes uttered a wilder yell, at which the menacing combatants turned fiercely round, and snapping their fingers, and clapping their hands, and shouting in the most terrible manner, they ran, they rushed, they leapt, they flew, their plaids streaming behind, their eyes flashing fire; again they faced each other, again they thudded with their feet, brandishing their arms, venting frightful cries, stamping with rage, springing from the floor, swirling

like whirlwinds, till the whole hall resounded as it were with thunder, every one at the table standing up and applauding.

CHAP. VIII.

It was soon found, by the Lord James and the Bishop, that, save the immediate vassals of the Earl, who were full of ire at the thought of their old Lord and master being sent to prison, the Lennoxmen were very backward, especially the Glenfruins; in so much, that the Lord James, who counted much on their aid, was obligated to send Bishop Finlay himself to urge their chief to join him. This the right reverend Prelate would have declined; for, according to the perfectest report, Glenfruin kept not a house for a hungry guest; and, as he said, it was not to be thought that any churchman could cross the hills in a cold spring morning without earning an appetite. However, the Lord James so pressed the mission upon him, that he agreed to set out on the journey.

A sedate shelty was accordingly provided to carry Bishop Finlay over the hills, and the skin of an otter, or selgh, was laid on its back, as an emblem and substitute for a saddle; two thongs cut from the hide of a cow were as stirrups, for in those days tanned leather was not among the Celts; and for a bridle there was another thong; and the bit, which was put into the mouth of the Bishop's shelty, was the key of the Provost of Dumbarton's door, which the chief of the Macfarlanes had, a short time before, taken away with him, when in the town on a herrying visitation, but which had been rescued by some of the Earl of Lennox's men, with all the other spoil, as the Macfarlanes were returning home to Arrochar.

Bishop Finlay had a pair of boots made of hairy goat-skin, which he drew on before he mounted the shelty, and being a churchman, and having as such no equestrian predilections, for he did not indeed approve of the

curvetting of horses, because such gesticulations, he said, were very perilous to riders. So he ordered four of those that were to be his guard across the mountains, to hold the shelty very steadfast while he got upon its back; the which, after some endeavouring, and the auxiliary of a leaping-on-stone, he at last achieved.

When he was in his seat, his feet in the stirrups, his prelatic gown properly accommodated, and the four-and-twenty clansmen appointed to guard him all in readiness and arrayed, twelve on the right and twelve on the left of the shelty, two of them, one on each side, took hold of it by the bridle, and led it forth the castle-gate, the Bishop sitting most composedly, and without any visible symptom of molestation or dread. And when they were forth the castle, and across the ferry, they made towards the hills; and for the great veneration and reverence that the Highlanders bore to Bishop Finlay, they, by

turns, two and two, led the shelty, by which the embassy was enabled to proceed at the rate of almost a mile an hour.

The sides of the hills were then rough with furze and heather; the waters of winter were still raging in the burns; the mosses were in divers places deep and flooded; and though in summer the journey to a deer-footed Highlander was not more than three hours of time, yet to Bishop Finlay on horseback, with a train of four-and-twenty men, it was a full equinoctial day's travel; for not only did many impediments obligate him to choose a winding way, but ecclesiastical decorum required that he should proceed gravely.

This embassy was certes a very solemn apparition on the hills. First, there was the Bishop aloft, with his pastoral crook headed with a ram's-horn made of beaten silver in his left hand, holding the bridle in his right, and two Celts leading the shelty. Then the mien and garb of his train were

very marvellous to behold; for their hempen locks were spiky, and bristled with an untonsured fury, which, with their pursed eyes and grinning visages, made them more hideous to look upon than satyrs; and had they been met by any wayfaring Christian on those lonely hills and silent solitudes, it might have been imagined that they were of the legions of the host of Diabolus carrying away Bishop Finlay.

In the sunny calm of the afternoon, they had reached the crown of the ridgy hills that rise between the Clyde and Lochlomond, and where the Bishop bade his train stop the shelty and help him to alight, that he might partake of some repast from their wallet of stores, was the brow of a mountain which, for the far and fair prospects that spread around, may well be called the Eye of Lennox. Truly it is a resting-place where the languor of weary limbs may be forgotten; for there the traveller needs no other solace

than the delight which the eye, that is, the hand of the spirit, gathers from all sides of that wide and majestical expanse.

Bishop Finlay, as he took his seat on the thymy cushion of a little knowle, while one of his train was setting forth the provisions on a fragment of rock behind him, looked eastward, and beheld beneath him many a swelling hill and brown moor, and here and there, but few and far between, corn lands in the freshest verdure of spring, nigh to which some turret, brightened by the sunshine, shone out from its cloud of fir-trees, and solitarily breathed a slender wreathe of silvery smoke into the crystaline and silent air. Before him rose the green hills of Renfrewshire, with their hazel-fringed burns and sparkling waterfalls; beyond them, ranging far into the south, his eye for some time tried to discern the form of many a glittering thing scattered on the hills and in the misty hollows that lay, alternately shadowed and gay, between the

nearer scene and the mountains that overlook the Solway, and the distant sea and the peaks of Arran, till, wearied in the vain endeavour, it rested on the unmolested waters of the Clyde, around which the shores were hanging headlong within, like the brim and inside of some Indian bowl curiously enamelled. A lone ferry-boat, slowly plying her heavy oars, was all the commerce moving then on that calm solitude.

When the Bishop had been some time seated in this still contemplation, being informed that the repast was set out, he rose and went to partake of the same; but he was so ravished by the scene which he then beheld, that he stood for some time in a state of wonderment unspeakable. Below lay Lochlomond, with all its marvels of cliffy islets and woody shores. Far eastward spread the rich vales of Buchanan, and, like a champion in the van of some mighty host, before him, with his helmet of clouds on, stood Benlomond, the

dark mantle of his shadow covering a wide space of the broad blue lake.

"Verily," said Bishop Finlay to himself, as he turned round and gazed again on all he had seen, "If we thrive in the endeavour to push King James from the throne, it would be a worthy achievement for the Church, if I could get a grant of all the lands seen from this hill-top to build an abbey. It would make a saint of me, if not a cardinal."

After his refreshment, the shelty was again brought, and Bishop Finlay, being elevated on the top of the rock, was lifted therefrom into the saddle, if saddle it might be called, which was but the skin of ane sea-otter.

All things being again ordered, the embassade began to descend the slope of the hill, slanting northerly into and across a valley towards the castle of the Glenfruins, which was soon seen standing by itself on the brow of a jutting hill, that was rocky and shaggy, and difficult to climb.

This castle was one tall square battlemented structure, with a lum or chimney at the one end, and two little turrets perched on the corners at the other; and round about it was a wall of goodly masonry, strong and high, and pierced in many places with holes for the valiant men of the clan to shoot therefrom their arrows; and in this wall there was a gate, with a bulwark at each side, very fair to look upon, and over the same was a loophole window for espial before opening the gate to let strangers in.

As Bishop Finlay and his train drew near, some half-a-score of the Glenfruins came to the outside of the gate. Very wild and dreadful they were, and they had round their loins and cast over their shoulders a plaid, not of skin, but really of weaver's work, though in likeness it was much similiar to the goat-skins whereof the Bishop's boots were made; and when they saw it was a bishop, and above all Bishop Finlay, who

had great reverence in these parts, they threw themselves on the ground before his shelty; and as he was lifted from its back, they kissed the hem of his garment, and he bestowed his benediction upon them.

Then Bishop Finlay was led thorough the gate into the court of the castle, wherein he saw five cows chewing their cude in a corner behind a dunghill, whereon divers swine grovelled at their pleasure, and hens and cocks were rampaging—a store for hospitality such as well befitted the castle-yard of such a Highland chieftain; and when he had looked around and saw that there was indeed a competent store of victual in those living creatures for his train, he was right glad of heart; for all the way thither he had thought of what was said concerning the spare feasts of Glenfruin, and was thereby much troubled in mind.

From the fore-court Bishop Finlay was conducted round the end of the turretted keep of the castle, and brought to a low and narrow

door in a wall, that was built from the corner of the keep to the outer wall; and having stooped his head, he entered in, and found himself in another court, and before him a stair which stood out from the keep, but led to a door high in the wall thereof. When he had been conducted up the steps of this stair, an old door, which had been the half of a gate, that had suffered in some raid, for it was charred or burnt, was laid from the stair-head to the door in the keep, and he having passed over the same, with some fear, stepped into the hall of Glenfruin.

At the upper end of this hall, in a vault or pen, a mighty fire was blazing and roaring, and before the same,—a pleasant sight, as Bishop Finlay thought,—there was the carcass of a sheep, still adorned with the head and horns, roasting on a spit made of a young tree. Four or five veterans were sitting on a form in the dark side of the chimney, and one of them was instructing a stripling, who was

kneeling on the hearth, screening his face with his shield from the scorching fire, where the roast needed basting.

This stripling was the young laird, and his instructor was the chief himself,—a strong, hale, gruff, and rough carle, with a bald head and a toosie grey beard. He was attired in plaiding of divers colours, which his lady and her daughters and handmaidens had carded, spun, and woven; and round him he wore a spacious toga of the like exhibiture, the corner being buckled on his left shoulder with ane broach as broad as the palm of a man's hand, knobbed and gnarled with an array of glass beads and other similar precious gems. He had moreover a sword on his thigh, on the hilt whereof were many rich carvings and cunning devices of o'ersea work; the which sword was, among the clan, accounted worth twenty head of the best cattle ever lifted by them or their fathers from the lands of Buchanan.

The stir and din caused by the entrance of the Bishop drew the eyes of the chief, and of those who were with him around the hall-fire, towards the door; and Glenfruin, seeing who was his visitor, advanced towards him, and greeted him in an hospitable manner, —the which was the more to be remarked, as in those days the chieftains were prouder than the bishops, and many of them could not brook the privileges which the churchmen claimed among their clans. Bishop Finlay, however, as is already rehearsed, was much beloved among the Highlanders, for he meddled not with their controversies, nor put any interdict on their raids into the Lowlands: indeed, considering how much gear was thereby brought into the Highlands, it would not have been a wise thing of him to have marred the helping of his own trencher, by counselling compassion towards the Amalekites, as he was wont in the castle halls to call the faint-hearted Lowlanders.

After due interchange of salutations, the Chief led the way for the Bishop to the foot of a moveable timber stair, so made that it might be drawn up in sudden alarms, or during quarrellings in the hall, and ascended the same, followed by his guest and the young chieftain.

When they were about half-way up the steps, the old warrior happened to look down, and seeing who was coming after the Prelate, he said to his son, giving him a crunt on the head with his staff, "Sowlls and podies, Nigel! bide down, and look to the cuisinage, and no let te sheep's podie, ye teevil, be prunt to an

CHAP. IX.

THE part of the castle into which Glenfruin led the way for the Prelate, was that which is called in the Saracenic tongue the harem. In the chamber, up into which they ascended, the lady and her two daughters, with the help of an aged crone that filled the manifold offices of nurse and midwife to the family, mistress of the yarn, weaver of the tartan, and chemist of the pot-dyes, were thriftily teazing and garbling wool.

In one corner stood a bed, and under it, with two large handles curiously fashioned and adorned, plainly of great antiquity, probably one of the chattels which the daughter of Godfridus MacArkyll brought with her when she married the ancestor of Glenfruin, was to be seen an ark or coffer with large brazen

bands and massy clasps, and a lock of cunning workmanship. In this coffer all the treasures and precious things were deposited, which the chiefs of the Glenfruins had gathered and hoarded in the course of many generations' raids and reivings.

At the foot of the bed hung a bundle of many heers, hasps, and spindles of worsted yarn, of divers hues, a trophy and testimony of the household thrift of the Lady Glenfruin; and on a shelf hard by the same lay a cheese, with two neighbourly wooden gardevines, and a drinking horn with a brim of graven silver. Beneath this shelf was a costly oaken elbow-chair, gnarled with flowery chisel-work, such as could not be surpassed for device and intricacy in any Lowland castle of that age. How it came into the castle of Glenfruin, whether brought among the spoils of some bold adventure, or purchased at the price of sheep and cattle lifted from the lands of Buchanan, were a vain thing now to deter-

mine. There however it was, the grandest of all the moveables whereof the clan Glenfruin then stood possessed, and near it was a table with six legs, each shapen into a conformity with the foot of a dog; there was likewise in that lady's chamber two beauffet stools, and on pegs along the wall, hung the mantles and garments of the lady and her two fair daughters, and swords that the chiefs of the race had taken from their foes in battle. Over the chimney the family-tree of pedigrees, with all its branches, hung depicted on ancient vellum ;—the lower part was so blackened and shrivelled by time and the touch of the kith and kin of the family, that no man could tell from what obliviated root the Glenfruins had sprung.

On entering the room, the Chief said aloud: "The Peeshop of Lismore, mi laidie, has come on a congregation with his penedictions for te goote of all our sowlls." And going to the carved elbow-chair before spoken of,

he drew it to some distance from the wall, and turning to the Prelate, added, "Pe pleasured, my Lord Peeshop, to make a sederunt."

Bishop Finlay, so invited, sat down.

Glenfruin then seated himself on one of the stools, and the lady, who had with her daughters risen from the floor, sat down on the other, while the young ladies found seats on the bedside: old Nora, after kissing the hem of the Right Reverend Father's garment, gathered the wool into her lap, and retired with it into an adjacent room.

To bless or to pray was seldom any part of Bishop Finlay's business, and of course he was not at all times prepared to answer a call for either. But on this occasion, seeing that the pious Chief of the Glenfruins regarded his visit as a pastoral advent, he resolved to look the difficulties of the emergency bravely in the face; accordingly, after a brief space of time spent in silence and rumination, he

rose, and, while Glenfruin with his lady and daughters knelt on the floor, lifted up his eyes and hands, and seemed to supplicate in the Latin tongue.

When he had made an end of praying, his pious auditors went and kissed his hand as he again seated himself in the elbow-chair,—after which Glenfruin went to the door and cried down the stair,—

"Nigel! Nigel!—are ye a toor nail, Nigel?" Nigel answered, and the Chief then continued,—

"Till te mooton pouke pe ready—ye'll pid te proth come up, for my Lord Peeshop has gotten a naething py his veeseetations this plissit mornings."

This order was speedily obeyed, with all the alacrity characteristic of Highland hospitality. The young Chief himself, to do the more homage to their holy guest, brought up the wooden bicker of soup, which he gave to his father, who held it till the

ladies had set out the table with the six feet. Then an officer high in the household brought five shells of clokie doos, or burnfoot-mussels, for in those days there were no spoons among the Celts; and Glenfruin and the ladies, together with Bishop Finlay and the young Chief, began to dip their shells into the wooden dish, and to eat of the broth, which was a seething of venison and barley.

When they had partaken thereof, which, by reason of the heat in it, was not easy to be done, Nigel was despatched below to select a fitting portion of the roasted sheep, and the Bishop began to break the purpose and object of his visit.

"Well, Glenfruin," said he, "what is your notion of this new way of ruling the realm?—No doubt, you have heard that Duke Murdoch and his sons have fallen under the King's displeasure,—and your old friend and good neighbour Lennox, he too is taken up and sent likewise to prison."

"Goote neepor, my Lord Peeshop," replied Glenfruin, "he was a neepor, tat's a to-be-surely,—put call ye't a goote neepor, to make his men reive us o' our owne honest liftings?—Goote neepor!—oomph.—My Lord Peeshop, what's a goote neepor?—te teevil! —oomph."

"That certainly," said Bishop Finlay, was not so kind in him as it might have been; but perhaps at that time there was some paction between him and Buchanan, by which he had undertaken to protect his cattle against the raids of your an as well as of the Macgregors.

"Te Macgregors, my Lord Peeshop.—Sowlls and podies!—te Macgregors!—I'll tell you, my Lord Peeshop, if Macgregor was to speech a word to me, I would put my foot ——— Sowlls and podies, te Macgregors! —oomph."

"Nay," replied Bishop Finlay, "nobody would think of *evening* the Glenfruins to

the like of the Macgregors; maybe, however, were you to play your policy a little adroitly, who knows but the Lord James might give them a shove with the left shoulder, for the love and kindness he bears towards you."

"Love and kindness,—oomph!" said the chief, "but wha do you cal te Lord Hemies?"

"Duke Murdoch's son," replied the Bishop: "he's now at Balloch Castle."

"Oo aye—te Lord Hemies!" exclaimed the Chieftain, "and he's pe come to Pawloch; and for what pe he come, my Lord Peeshop, to Pawloch?"

"The Earl his grandfather, the Duke his father, and the Lords Walter and Alexander his brothers, with many of the stoutest of their friends, are all imprisoned on a charge of high treason."

"Aye, aye, my Lord Peeshop,—and is it a to-be-surely tat te King's Majesty, Gote

tirect him, will make a sample of his judification upon tem. He'll make a praa profit py te forfeiture, an' he do tat, my Lord Peeshop."

The Bishop was somewhat startled by the complacency with which Glenfruin spoke—but he said—

"No doubt he looks to what he will gain; but is it not, however, very alarming to think that noblemen of such high blood, pedigree, and privilege, should be laid hold of by laws made for varlets, and obliged to show by what other charters than their swords they hold possession of their lands? How would you like to have your right so questioned?"

"Sowlls and podies! my Lord Peeshop, are ye a sincerity? Ye make te hair on my head like te teeth of a heckle. Sowlls and podies! my Lord Peeshop—is't a possible tat ye think I have na a righteousness?—Sowlls and podies!—oomph."

"Quite the contrary," replied Bishop Finlay; "I know not a baron in the land that is more truly the lord of his own lordship than you are chief and master of your own estate and vassals; but I would ask you, if it is to be endured, that men of family are to be questioned how they came by their lands? A stop, Glenfruin, ought to be put to the attempt at once, and that too by a show in the field: there is no other way of making King James sensible that English laws and practices will never do in Scotland. Our forefathers might as well have submitted to King Edward as to be brought under English thraldom in this way."

"Al tat, my Lord Peeshop," said Glenfruin, "al tat is a verification; put if te King's Majesty, Gote pliss him, have had a potential to poot Tuke Murdoch an' heirs of his pody into a custody, and to make a similitude with Lennox and others of his side—oomph."

"But the Lord James is still free, and will revenge the injury done to his family."

"Te Lord Hemies, my Lord Peeshop—te Lord Hemies,—poor laadie!—oomph."

"It is surely not possible that you will submit to see such things done? What is their case, Glenfruin, to-day, may be yours to-morrow."

"Put, my Lord Peeshop, if te King's Majesty, Gote prosperity him, make repellious traitors of his preesoners, and take teir lands for a forfeiture, maype he'll no make an objeck to let te like o' me, tat will ne'er be a molest to his laas, to come in for a skirt o' te lands o' Lennox; for, my Lord Peeshop, some of te lands o' Lennox would be great commodity, and a plenty o' pleasure to all te Glenfruins."

By this time the board had been replenished, and Bishop Finlay, discerning that the Chief saw it might not be profitable to join in the rebellion, turned the discourse to plea-

santries in the Celtic tongue with the ladies, who were so highly accomplished in that erudite language, that they never thought of conversing in any other.

CHAP. X.

While Bishop Finlay was on his embassade, the Countess of Ross passed by the castle of Balloch, with a goodly troop of fair damsels and a redoubtable guard of gallant squires, to see her kinswoman, the beautiful Sibilla Macdonald. daughter to the Lord of the Isles, embarked at Dumbarton in a galley for the Isle of Skye. They knew not that the Lord James Stuart was then in the castle, else they would not have come by that road; for he was betrothed to the Lady Sibilla, and the ruin which had fallen on all his family was the cause that made the Countess send her home. It happened, however, shortly after the Bishop had departed from Balloch castle, that the Lord James, with a numerous train,

had gone forth to take the pastime of hunting; and while he was on the hills, he discovered the gay retinue of the ladies moving down the banks of the river; and curious to know who they were, and for what occasion so many gentles in glittering attire should be travelling at such a time in that direction, he rode hastily towards them.

But when he came near enough to discern that the gallants were gentlemen of the Earl of Ross's train, and saw the stately Countess herself on her quiet grey palfrey, with her hood thrown back, that she might be fanned by the cool freshness of the gale, and beheld by her side, on an ambling jennet, a slender and delicate lady, all veiled like a Cistertian nun, he was shaken with a strange anxiety; for in the graceful movements of that gentle lady, albeit the dejection with which she drooped her head was unlike the sprightly air of her wonted carriage, he discerned the bride to whom, but for the sudden visitation

of the King's displeasure, he was soon to have been married; and the thought came to him, as it were with the flash and scorching of lightning, that all hope of their union was destroyed, and that she was then departing back to the house of her father, never to return for him.

He reined his horse on the brow of the hill that overlooked the road, and then alighted and held it by the bridle. His heart beat thickly. Hitherto the spirit of indignation and revenge had animated him with fierce resolutions, and the sense of the adversity which had overtaken himself, and the thought of the ruin which hung over his father, and his father's friends, had borne him above the grief of his condition; but the sight of the approaching cavalcade made him feel that his situation was one too in which sorrow had a heavy part.

His first motion was to advance and make himself known; but without being almost

conscious of the reason why he did so, he had suddenly leapt from the saddle, and he remained irresolute, with the bridle in his hand, till he was observed by one of the gentlemen of the Lady Ross's retinue. By that time several of his own train had seen the party approaching, and they came towards him, that they might be ready to assist or to obey.

The attention of the Countess was directed towards the spot where the Lord James stood, and she halted her palfrey, and raising her right hand to skreen her eyes from the sun, looked up the hill for the space of two or three minutes without speaking.

She then called one of her servants, to send him forward to inquire who the stranger was that seemed disposed to interrupt her progress; for so she interpreted the attitude and intention of the Lord James, from the numbers and haste of his followers assembling from all parts of the hill. But her train had quickly discovered that it was the outlawed

Prince; and the man whom she had summoned to send forward, knowing the effect that the news would have on the Lady Sibilla, informed the Countess in a whisper, that it was her betrothed bridegroom.

For a moment the Lady Ross wist not what to do; but, after a short reflection, she ordered the servant to ride up to the Lord James, and tell him to come to her; at the same moment, bidding the Lady Sibilla remain where she was, she touched her grey palfrey, and ambled forward to a distance, attended only by two gentlemen, whom she ordered to remain apart as the Lord James joined her.

"What do you intend by this?" said the Countess; "surely you can never think of involving a lady, whom you have professed to love, in the present ruin and jeopardy of your fortunes? I entreat you, James Stuart, not to exasperate, by any new outrage, the King's justice, which is already sufficiently

roused against the house of Albany, but allow us to pass unmolested;—Sibilla's griefs are more than she can well bear.—Do, for the mercy of Heaven and the sake of the blessed Virgin, retire, and let us pursue our journey in peace."

"Chance alone," replied the Lord James, "has thrown me in your way; but what you say of Sibilla's sorrow is reason enough to make me stop you. It is for me, and on my account, that she is grieved, and I cannot, as a knight and nobleman, but desire to lighten her grief."

"Truly, it is a kind way to do it," replied the Countess. "You would console her, by adding to those offences which have brought on the proceedings that have withered her hopes. Be you assured, that the King is much more likely to pardon treason against himself, than the abduction of a lady of Sibilla's rank. But, my Lord, you shall not take her from me—my train is in bravery and

numbers more than equal to yours." In so saying the Countess waved her hand, and in a moment all the gallants and servants of her retinue were around her like a whirlwind. The damsels, who were left behind, screamed and flocked towards Sibilla, where they alighted from their horses, and assisted her also to alight.

The train of the Lord James had followed him with anxious eyes; and seeing him thus suddenly in the power of strangers, they instinctively thought, that the readiest way of extricating him from the danger into which he had fallen was to make towards the defenceless ladies, conceiving that by so doing they would probably draw off the main part of the guard by whom he was surrounded, and thereby afford him a chance to escape.

"You have been rash, Lady," said the Lord James, when he found himself environed by her train on all sides; "I meant you no harm, and surely my concern for Si-

billa, to whom I have caused, as you say, so much sorrow, ought not to have been thus promptly visited by an arrestment which may bring my head to the axe. You have, however, made me your prisoner, Lady, and I submit to you as such."

"If I did not know the cunning that is in you, James Stuart," exclaimed the Countess, "I would repent me of this; but, until Sibilla is safe, I will not trust to your protestations."

"Safe! my Lady: she is free, and I am your prisoner."

"I would it were indeed so," replied the Countess; "see, your men have her in their power!"

"But you may soon have her with you," said Stuart with a smile. "Shall I order the ladies to be brought hither?"

"I may not trust you," said the Countess eagerly. "I cannot be answerable to my brother, Macdonald, if I bring his daughter

into the risk of being with you—situated as you now are."

"You cherish a harsh opinion of me," said the Lord James gravely. "This encounter is accidental; and having no warrant nor authority to arrest me, why do you deal so hardly by me? In truth, Lady, I throw myself upon the compassion and clemency of your sex. Consider in what situation Sibilla and I so lately stood. You say that the ruin which has fallen upon me has pierced her heart and blighted her happiness; I do assure you, by the honour of my knighthood, that she cannot suffer more for me than I do for her. This meeting has indeed made me know what it is to be unfortunate. Do with me, however, as you please—give me up to my enemies—carry me to them in Sibilla's company—it is meet that she who was to be my bride should see me taken to the scaffold, for to that consummation I doubt not my misfortunes will now come. But, Lady,

you will not so far forego the gentleness of your own nature, as to do all that?—You will still commiserate the fate that has divided me from Sibilla, and permit us, before we are for ever separated, to bid each other farewell?"

"Will you order your train then to retire?" said the Countess with hesitation.

"Undoubtedly," replied the Lord James eagerly; and he desired a gentleman of the guard by whom he was surrounded to go for one of his men.

"When this storm has blown over," said he, addressing himself again to the Countess, "surely Macdonald will allow the marriage to proceed."

"It is broken off for the present," replied the Countess coldly; "but what have you to say to Sibilla?"

The Lord James smiled as he said, "A lady, so renowned for beauty and lovers as the Countess of Ross has been, needs no answer to that question; but it cannot be

that you intend we shall take farewell before so many spectators?"

"I will not permit her to be out of thy sight. I know what you are, James Stuart, and the desperation of your fortunes is not likely to make you less adventurous than you were before."

While this was passing, the Ross-man, whom the Lord James had sent to his train, came back with one of them, and his master ordered him to bid his fellows bring the ladies forward.

"Not so! not so!" exclaimed the Countess. "Your train shall not come nigh us!"

The man halted, and looked towards his master.

"You put ill thoughts into my head, Lady," said the Lord James; and turning to the servant, he added,—"Then let the ladies come by themselves."

"Send off your men," rejoined the Countess anxiously;—whereon he said aloud,—

"Tell them to retire;" but, in giving this order, he glanced his eye to the hill and the river, which the Countess observing, clapped her hands as the man rode off, and exclaimed, —"We are undone!"

"You allow your terrors, Lady, to overcome the wisdom and discretion for which you are so justly renowned," said the Lord James coolly; and raising his bridle he moved his horse close to her palfrey, which, as if by accident, he touched so sharply with his spur, that it bolted and almost threw her from the saddle. The confusion which this alarm occasioned, caused an opening in the circle of horses round the Prince, through which he suddenly darted into the rapid river, and soon gained the opposite bank. In the same moment, the man who had carried the message to his train having alighted, seized the Lady Sibilla by the waist, and threw her up before one of his companions, who instantly galloped off with her to the castle.

The outcries—the panic—the rushing into the river—the trampling—the flight—and the consternation which these headlong incidents at once produced, is not to be told; but the Countess of Ross, before she could rein her palfry, found herself alone—the prisoner flown—her niece carried off—and her train scattering themselves, at full speed, on both sides of the river, in pursuit of the fugitives.

CHAP. XI.

Leaving for a time the Lord James Stuart and the Lady Sibilla Macdonald to the uncertainty of their fortunes, it is expedient to consider what, in the meantime, was doing elsewhere. As soon as the Earl of Atholl had arrived at Scone, the King held a session of the Council, at which it was determined to proceed against the prisoners without any respect to their propinquity. By whom this advice was urged, whether it was a suggestion of his Majesty's own wisdom, or insinuated by the Earl of Atholl, has not been divulged; but, in consequence thereof, a high and solemn tribunal for the trial of Duke Murdoch, with his father-in-law and two sons, all then in custody, was ordered to be formed and held at Stirling,

whereat the King in person should preside in his regal estate.

In coming forth from the Council-chamber after this austere resolution, his Majesty took hold of the Earl of Atholl by the arm, and they walked together in the verdant meadows that lie between the Abbey-palace of Scone and the swirling waters of the river Tay.

It was a pleasant afternoon; and the green-vestured Spring sat smiling in her arbour of budding wands and interwoven boughs, with many a sweet blossom in her lap, and a young bird on her finger, which she was teaching to hop and sing.

While the King and his uncle, the Earl, were walking along sedately, discoursing of the cares which then oppressed the royal mind, and weighing in the scales of discreet reason the considerations that had prevailed at the Council-board, touching the high crimes and misdemeanours of Duke Murdoch's family, his Majesty would often stop, and look

around and sigh, as he inhaled the fragrant freshness of the free air, and beheld the far-seen mountain-coronal of Breadalbane, then glowing like the purple amethyst to the setting sun. For, in his youth, he was wont to sit in an ancient turret of the towers of his captivity, enjoying the gladdening sense of liberty, in the contemplation of the bright and broad freedom that lies in the boundless expanse of the view from Windsor-hill.

"What eye," said he to the Earl, "can look on this fair scene without delight? and what heart think of the misrule that makes it scarcely fit for the abode of man, without anger and sorrow?"

"Your Highness," replied Atholl, "has but to go on with your intents;—aggressions restrained, justice impartially awarded, and offences punished, will soon make it worthy of the beauty it has received from Heaven."

"And I will go on:—yes; by the help of God, though I should myself lead the life of

a dog, I will make the key keep the castle, and the bush protect the cow. But it is a dreadful thing, that the first of my task should require such severity towards my own kin!"

"Is your Majesty then really resolved to bring the prisoners to trial?" said Atholl, with a look that betokened some latent purpose in the question; but the King not heeding his manner, for he esteemed his uncle beyond all his counsellors, replied frankly—

"Is it not so decided?—Can you doubt it?—Give me leave to say, my Lord, that I was not altogether content with you to-day. Had the Duke done nothing else than stript the crown of the lands, which he has squandered on his partizans, he had done enough to deserve the heaviest punishment. Long must the kingdom rue the consequences of the poverty that he has entailed on your kings. He has not left us the means to reward the fidelity of a menial. How shall we ever be able to keep in check the arrogance

of a nobility so accustomed to rapine? We have neither the means to make it their interest to serve us, nor wherewithal to enforce their allegiance. Yes, my Lord, I am resolved to go on, and I look to your able and experienced wisdom for encouragement and support."

"But surely," replied the Earl, "should they be found guilty, as I doubt not they must, it cannot be your Majesty's intention to bring them to punishment?"

"Why not?" exclaimed the King, surprised at the remark. "Do you think that, out of any consideration for the power of their friends, or of any foe, I shall be afraid to do my duty?"

"I but thought," said Atholl humbly, "that, as they are so near of kin to your Majesty, their lives might be spared."

"They are not yet found guilty, at least according to law," replied the King; "but if they were, Justice knows not propinquity.

The proceedings against them, however, shall be open and before all the world. No man shall accuse me, in this stern business, of being actuated by malice or any other base motive. Though the trial will, perhaps, bring disgrace on our blood, it shall yet be a proud thing for Scotland, and a glorious vindication of her long-abused justice."

"I cannot, however, but grieve for Duke Murdoch," said the Earl, with a sorrowful cadence. "He is my cousin—"

"So is he mine," interrupted the King; "and I grieve that he is so, because he has proved himself so bad a man; and his vice wants the grace of bravery, for it seems almost questionable whether his weakness or wickedness is most in fault. The nation might have pardoned his misrule; but humanity can never forgive the licentiousness in which he has indulged his sons. As a kinsman, my Lord, I have more cause to grieve for them than you; for by their deaths I

can gain nothing which may not be obtained by the forfeiture of their estates, but you will come so much nearer the throne."

The countenance of the Earl changed at the observation, and he looked troubled, and cast down his eyes, saying—

"Your Majesty cannot suppose that any consideration of that kind would, to me, lighten the thought of the sad destiny which inevitably awaits so many friends?"

He would have proceeded to say something still more calculated to win the King's charitable interpretation of the compassion which he had shown throughout for the misfortunes of the house of Albany, but just at that moment Anniple of Dunblane rushed from behind a holly-bush nigh to where they were then standing.

King James was not only startled by this sudden obtrusion, but filled with wonder at the wildness of her small bright piercing eyes; and his wonder grew to awe as she placed

herself immediately, before him, and leaning with both hands on a rude sapling, which served her for a staff, gazed steadily at him for some time, and then looked round to Atholl with an expression of pleasure, so ghastly, charnel, and yet triumphant, that the King shuddered, and hastily turned away from the contemplation of an object too hideous, mystical, and undaunted, to be seen in that mood without astonishment mingled with horror.

"She is a poor harmless natural," said the Earl, observing the revolting effect which she had produced on the King; "but the country folk regard her with superstitious reverence."

"I do not wonder at their dread," said his Majesty solemnly; "but come, my Lord, let us return to the palace."

"Stop," cried Anniple, and advancing up to the King, she laid her staff softly on his shoulder, as he moved away. Atholl, sur-

prised at this bold familiarity, ran forward and pushed it off, and at the same moment the King, who was not less amazed, turned round.

"Stop! James Stuart," she resumed, dropping the end of her staff on the ground.

"What would you?" said the King, willing to indulge her infirmity, and struck with sore pity at the remnants of beggary which hung around, but hid not the anatomy of her shrunken and withered form.

"Ye wear the crown and the velvet gown," cried Anniple to his Majesty; "and I have but a blanket and a bodle; but for all the lands of Badenoch, Atholl, Breadalbane, Strathern, and Strathmore, I wouldna change my beild in Dunblane kirk-yard for your bonny Queen-lady's silken bower, to dree the penance that she maun dree."

"And wherefore would ye not?" said the King. However, she gave no heed to the question, but dropping her eyes, and speaking to herself, she murmured out—

"Often I have sat on the town braehead, and seen the reek o' the happy town-houses, and grat my een sair, that the ill-deedy fairies had made me to live and to be without any kind mother; and often, in the blithe summer nights, when other weans were leaping wi' gladness at Through the Needle-ee, and would na let me play wi' them, I yearned to steal some holy Abbot's purse, to buy mysel' a wee singing sister or a brother. But it's weel for me I may say now, that I never had, and never can know, the peril of kith and kin."

The Earl of Atholl's whole frame was shaken to so great a degree, as she uttered this disconsolate soliloquy, that, notwithstanding the fascination with which such extreme wretchedness had arrested the King's attention, he observed his emotion, and said—

"I wonder not she says so; for the whole country cannot but sorrow that I am forced to proceed so cruelly against so many that should have been my best friends."

The Earl was unable to answer, or was perhaps prevented, by his surprise at the freedom with which Anniple went close to the King, and raising his surcoat aside, touched him on many parts of the body with her finger—

"What is this for?" said the King, adding to the Earl, "let her alone, my Lord, I am not afraid of any spells."

"Eight-and-twenty bloody wounds—I see them all, and the hands that bear the knives!—Let me look at your's, Lord Atholl," exclaimed Anniple, and suddenly grasping him firmly by the right wrist, she looked at his hand, and alternately at something about the King—

"Yours is not among them, my Lord," and she dropt the hand carelessly. At that moment two officers came hastily towards them, and Anniple darted away.

"Messengers," said one of the officers, "have arrived from Glasgow, with tidings of

a rebellion in Lennox, headed by the Lord James Stuart and the Bishop of Argyll."

"What! already in such power!" exclaimed the King; "you see, my Lord Atholl, how much our worthy kinsmen show themselves deserving of mercy. This is the submission you and others undertook the Lord James would send in. But no matter—his quickness in ill shall not outrun our justice. Let us return to the palace, and call the council together again. It is demanded of us at once to quench this treason, and to bring the other traitors to their audit, else the wild woman's prediction may be too soon fulfilled.

CHAP. XII.

BUT it was not from the Lord James Stuart, and Bishop Finlay only, that the King had cause to fear adversaries in arms against his determination to administer justice without respect of persons or of kin. Of all the adherents of the house of Albany, there was not one of so bold a spirit as the Sir Robert Græme before spoken of; and no sooner was it known that he had made his peace by submission, and had been delivered from durance, than he was expected to show himself in his true colours. And so it came to pass; for in the same hour in which he was released from custody, he began to plan devices and stratagems, to revenge the wrong which, in his own notion, he had sustained, and also, partly, to show his gratitude for the manifold

favours which he had received at the hands both of the Regent Robert and of Duke Murdoch.

Though a man of singular obduracy in his lawless undertakings and ruthless, bold, and bloody, beyond any other chieftain of his time, yet Sir Robert held the virtues of friendship in such esteem, that he used to say, "As it is the duty of all men to support the sufferer in a just cause, so, in like manner, is it the duty of friends to stand by one another, be the cause of quarrel right or wrong."

His first endeavours were directed to achieve the deliverance of the Lord Walter Stuart from the Bass, where, as it is already told, he had been sent on his arrest for secure ward; for the Lord Walter being a knight of undaunted valour in enterprise, stout of heart, strong of limb, and dauntless in danger, it was thought no castle on the main land was redoubtable enough to contain so subtle and intrepid a spirit.

Græme was chiefly moved to think first of the Lord Walter, on account of his offence against the King having been of a more open and daring description than the treasons imputed to his father and brothers. Many holy churchmen had besides accused him of riotous extortions and sacrilegious pillage, and gentlemen of good ancestry charged him with irremediable outrages in their families; moreover, the pious Lady Abbess of the nunnery at North Berwick had, with her own pen, written to Bishop Wardlaw of St Andrews, that it was not to be told what the Lord Walter Stuart and his reprobate companions had perpetrated in her house.

But as the Bass stands far in the sea, and is difficult of access from a boat, save when the winds are propitious, Græme was for some time perplexed to know in what manner he could convey his mind and intents to the prisoner. At last he bethought him of an expedient very bold and perilous, but the

more recommended to him by the bravery it demanded.

He hired at the South Queen's-ferry a boat and mariners, purposing, as he gave out, to pass thither to Crail, and thence to St Andrews, in fulfilment of a vow which he had made in prison, as if it was a thing within the compass of chance, that Sir Robert Græme should have in sincerity ever any pilgrimage of piety to perform. And having embarked therein, the mariners spread the sails:—a lively breeze was then blowing from the westward, and the boat rushed before the wind, as if it had been instinct, with eagerness to reach her port. But, as she approached Inch Keith, Græme began to feign afraid of the waves, he that knew not what fear was, and to picture rising blasts and raging seas, such as no man in his right mind, as he said, ought that evening to encounter; by dint of which, and exhortations following thereon, he caused the mariners to take shelter under the lea of the

island, in the hope that the wind would, in the course of the night, abate; for in vain did they assure him there was no danger, and represented that Kirkcaldy was a safer haven, since he was not content to continue his voyage.

Under the eastern cliff of Inch Keith they lay till the sun was set, and the lights on the shore and the stars in the lift were kindled. The moon, but four days old, was setting in the clouds over the Pentland-hills, and seemed as if she was trailing from the sea a long and rippled line of cold and watery light. For though Sir Robert Græme still would maintain that the waves were too rough for his small bark to encounter, the mariners saw that they were but twinkling in the moonshine like the wimpling of a running river.

When the moon had sunk behind the hills, and the land lay black between the restless sea and the starry sky, Græme ordered the sails to be again spread; but when the mari-

ners, as their course lay, steered in towards the coast of Fife, he rose in well-acted displeasure, and accused them not only of having lost their way, but of making for the Lothian coast.

They protested that they could not be mistaken, that the darkness was not so thick but they could discern the land-marks, and beseeched him to have confidence in their knowledge and skill.

He was not however to be appeased by their protestations; on the contrary, the more they controverted his opinion, his anger waxed the fiercer, and he insisted, that if they would not go on as he ordered, they should return.

They told him it was then too late to return, for the tide was drifting down; but at last, by oaths and imprecations, they were induced to keep more out in a southerly course to sea, and towards morning, the Bass isle, grey and dark, was seen rising over the starboard before them.

Græme affected great alarm when he beheld

the lofty rugged cliffs, and heard the heavy noise of the dashing sea, and of the clouds of the cawing sea-bird that hovered around the rocks, and he sullenly inquired, as one that fears, the name of the island to which they had betrayed him.

When they told him it was the Bass, he affected for a time a wild and fearful perplexity, saying, "Alas! what shall become of me?—Have I been set free from the pleasant heights of Stirling, but to be immured on these doleful rocks!" Then he suddenly seemed to recollect himself, saying, "But Sir Patrick Haliburton, the constable, is a true and loyal knight—I will tell him in what manner this misfortune has come upon us; steer therefore to the landing-place,—I will crave his aid."

The mariners well knew that there was eminent hazard to all who dared to approach that prison-isle, when there was any person of dignity incarcerated there, and again would fain have refused the order, saying, that

North Berwick was so hard by, that he needed not to go to the Bass, but only to steer straight to that port. He, however, drew his sword, and wounded one of them in the arm, for daring disobedience to his commands, after the peril they had caused him to pass, and the jeopardy into which they had brought him. So the men became afraid, and thinking he was not in his right mind, ceased to reason with him, but submitted themselves to do whatsoever he desired. Accordingly, he having ordered them to make for the landing-place, they lowered their sails and plied their oars with great vigour; and when the boat was brought under the wall, Græme made a sad memorial to the guard of what he had suffered from his contumacious and unskilful crew, entreating the soldier to inform the constable, Sir Patrick Haliburton, who he was, whence he had come, and whither he was going, and to crave his hospitality, until some other bark could be obtained to take him to

Crail; for farther than he had come he would not go, save in stress of need, with mariners so unpractised as he had found those to be who had brought him thither.

Sir Patrick Haliburton, on hearing this plausible tale, much commiserated the misadventure of the petitioner, and came himself to the port, and very courteously invited Græme to land, telling him, however, that from his orders, he must of necessity hold him prisoner till he received instructions from the King.

"I know," replied Græme, "that you cannot do otherwise, and I am content to abide with you. It is, indeed, a thing not to be thought, that you, Sir Patrick Haliburton, would let me go free, knowing, as doubtless you do, that I was so lately imprisoned on a charge of treason; for as yet you cannot have heard of my pardon."

Sir Patrick was much won by this seeming frankness of Græme, and assured him, that

though he must hold him as a prisoner, yet should he be as free as himself, and that he would do all things in his power to make him pleasant pastime, till an answer came to the report of the incident of his arrival.

"Am I, then, the only prisoner on the rock, that you purpose to entertain me with such freedom?" said Græme.

"No," replied Sir Patrick, "it is not so; the Lord Walter Stuart is here."

"The Lord Walter Stuart!" exclaimed Græme, as if in great amaze; "is he not yet at liberty? I am grieved to hear that, for you know, Sir Patrick, we are near of kin—and—but—he need not be told by what accident I am here—for it is not fit we should hold any communion together. It would be an ill return for the King's grace to me, were I to hold any intercourse with one that stands so justly under the cloud of his royal displeasure."

"You speak, Sir Robert Græme," replied

Sir Patrick, "as a gentleman and a true knight, who has received a great boon from his Majesty. But there can be no harm in visiting your kinsman in my presence. In sooth, he has of late begun to take his condition much to heart, and to fret impatiently at his fortune."

"Nay, Sir Patrick, it must not be so; I will not offer myself to the company of the Lord Walter," said Græme; "but you may tell him that I am on the rock, and it will be cheering news, I well know, when he hears I have been pardoned."

Thus, with well-dissembled policy, as they were ascending from the landing-place to the castle, did Græme gain upon the confidence of the constable, who was an aged knight of unspotted honour, and who executed his harsh office in so mild a manner, as to make captivity appear beneath his power almost as gracious as hospitality.

CHAP. XIII.

When Sir Patrick Haliburton had conducted Græme into his own chamber in the castle, and ordered a repast to be set before him, he then went and told the Lord Walter, by what accident his kinsman had been thrown on the island. On coming back to Græme, they fell into discourse concerning the events of the time,—the Constable informing his wily guest of many things, which, though he knew well, he yet affected not to know, especially in what related to the disgrace and disasters that had fallen on the proud house of Albany.

"Beshrew me, Sir Robert Græme," said Sir Patrick, "it is not kind, nor courteous of you, to be so near your kinsman and not visit him. I shall offend no or-

der in allowing you to see him; for, though my prisoner, I am not commanded to enforce upon him any unusual restraint. Poor gentleman! since he heard of the rigorous arrest of his father and brother, he has begun to droop apace. I have told him how perforce you have been driven hither—"

"Indeed!" replied Græme. "You would not thereby add to his comfort; for, knowing the peril of treason in which I so lately stood myself, he must have marvelled at learning I was here."

"Not at all, not at all," said Sir Patrick. "At first he seemed a little surprised, and was thoughtful; but he soon brightened, and begged that I would let you come to him."

"It grieves me, Sir Patrick Haliburton," said the treacherous and wary Græme, "that he should have made a request so indiscreet. What can he have to say to me that may not be transmitted by you?—It would only multiply the dangers into which he has fallen,

were we to hold any communion together. How does he bear with his prison? Though to be incarcerated is great adversity to one of such accustomed bodily activity, yet is he withal fortunate, compared with the close durance that his father suffers at Carlaverock under Sir Ralph Maxwell, of whose insolence to all that come within the ward of his keys you doubtless must have often heard; as for Edmonstone, who had charge of those that were with me in Stirling, I vow to God he has not the ruth of a Highland schore. He kept us apart in cells, as if we had been savage beasts, not Christian men, and made our dungeons echo with threats that he durst not have breathed to his own fancy in the free daylight."

"Aye, Sir Robert Græme," replied the Governor, "we are all in our trusts too prone to prove our power. But surely it becomes not the honour of knighthood to exasperate the griefs of the defenceless. For

my part, I think the least of my duty, as Constable of the Bass, is the safe custody of the unfortunate men committed to my care: I feel myself bound to employ all charities wherewith anguish may be alleviated and privation solaced, to soften and sweeten the hardships of their lot. Truly it is to me, Sir Robert, matter of affliction, that you will not visit your gallant kinsman. But if you will not go to his chamber with me, you cannot restrain me from bringing him hither; it is a grace that I cannot deny myself: nay, though it may at this time move your displeasure, I am sure hereafter I shall stand the higher for't in your good opinion."

With these words, Sir Patrick Haliburton clapped his hands thrice, and an officer of the guard coming into the room he said—

"Go to the Lord Walter Stuart, and entreat for me the honour of his presence. Nay, Sir Robert, it must not be that you will go away. I pray you be seated again."

On the appearance of the officer Græme had risen, seemingly with the intention of retiring; but the earnest manner in which the old Knight addressed him, laying at the same time his hand upon his arm, and pressing him with the familiarity of good fellowship into his chair, obligated him to remain.

During the time of this hospitable contest, the officer, with three men of the guard, proceeded to the chamber where the Lord Walter was confined, and having delivered the courteous message from the Constable, they returned, bringing him with them, and entered the room just at the moment when his kinsman had resumed his seat, and before Sir Patrick had again taken his chair at the end of the board.

Hearing the clank of arms approaching the door, which was presently thrown open, Græme looked round, and beheld the officer, with a link in his hand, ushering the prisoner, who came behind him from a long dark gallery, towering in the port and pride of a

princely manhood,—the three soldiers following in the obscurity of his shadow,—their arms gleaming dimly in the light, and their fierce visages scowling more fiercely, half lighted, half hid, as the troubled flame of the link flared in the currents of the wind.

Sir Patrick Haliburton, in homage to his high-born prisoner, rose from his seat, and Græme also rose; but there was an eagerness in his manner that betrayed the animation of some feeling far different from the respectfulness of the aged Constable.

The officer, on entering the room, stepped aside as the noble prisoner came forward, and the three soldiers filled the door.

The Lord Walter Stuart was then in the prime of youthful vigour. His stature was majestical, and his complexion, tinged with the dark blood of his royal race, was so brightened with the ruddy hue of health and hardy pastimes, that he was justly accounted one of the comeliest knights in all Scot-

land. His eyes were bold and bright, and a pleasant arrogance in his smile, that bespoke admiration and homage, suited well with his proud demeanour and manly beauty.

Being a prisoner, he had neither dirk nor sword, nor baton; but he wore his breastplate of brass, inlaid with many a curious device of silver, representing thistles and fleurs-de-lis, lions and griffins, and other honourable augmentations and pageantries of arms and chivalry. His surcoat was of green Genoese velvet, lined with yellow silk; and he wore a costly ruff of many folds, adorned with o'ersea embroidery, round his neck, and on his head a black Gascon cap, looped up over the right temple by a golden clasp, fastened to a rich knot of garnets and other glittering stones, through which an eagle's feather was stuck, as it were with a careless bravery.

As he stepped towards the table he glanced aside significantly to Grme, who, apparently with a cold indifference, returned

the salutation ; and he stretched out his hand frankly to the Constable, and passing round the board took a seat at his right hand.

"I shall not know, Haliburton," said he, "how to repay you for all these civilities; but I did not expect, from what you had told me, that I should be permitted to approach so penitent a proselyte as my kind cousin there."

The taunt in this speech was deprived of all offence, by the look with which it was explained, to Græme, who replied,—

"It cannot be, Lord Walter, that you imagine I was not sorely grieved to hear, when freed from confinement myself, you were still a prisoner in this place. But the accident which obliged me to take refuge here was so extraordinary, that, under all circumstances, you cannot, my Lord, but acknowledge I should have acted most unwisely, both in respect to your condition and my own, had I in any degree been forward to seek your com-

pany. Sir Patrick there will attest, that I gave to him good and sufficient reasons why I ought not to visit you; and if any ill henceforth arise, from our being brought in this manner together, I must be acquitted of all blame."

"Nobody will impute to Sir Robert Græme any motive beyond what he professes," replied the prisoner, with a smile that his kinsman understood; "but I think courtesy might have claimed, on such an occasion, something from loyalty. Had you been in my place and I in yours, Græme, I would not have so stood on my loyalty. However, take your own way; I am not the less obliged to our kind host—by no other name shall I ever recollect him—for this little interlude to the dulness of imprisonment. Pray, may I venture to ask if you know aught of my father and brothers?"

Græme looked towards Sir Patrick, and said,—"I am not aware what questions may

be answered; but those who hear me," and he threw his eyes towards the officer and soldiers, "will bear witness to the reluctance I have had to this interview."

"Nay, nay, Sir Robert Græme," cried the unsuspecting Knight, "you are too chary in all this. You would make your noble kinsman feel the thraldom of his condition more sharply than there is any need. What he has inquired becomes him as a Christian man. I beseech you, Sir Robert, to call to mind, that there are no prisoners at my board, whatever there may be in my custody. Here I esteem you as honourable guests, so use your pleasure;" and he motioned to the officer to retire with the guard.

Græme then repeated, in a manner purposely not so clear as he had received it from Sir Patrick, all that the worthy Knight had told him concerning the Duke and the Lord Alexander.

"But have you heard nothing of my bro-

ther James? What has become of him? How has he escaped? Or why is he spared?" cried the prisoner eagerly.

"It was reported at Stirling," said Græme, "I know not how truly, that he was in Lennox gathering the vassals of your grandfather. This, however, was but a report—a mere report. Of what avail would it prove, even were it true?"

"Every thing," exclaimed the Lord Walter exultingly. "If the old spirit of the Scottish barons be not quenched, it will teach this new King of charters and statutes, what it is to treat so many of the nobility like hoseless varlets. I am proud to hear such bravery of my brother; but it makes me feel what it is to be a prisoner."

"I must not, my Lord, listen to such open approbation of rebellion," replied Græme soberly; "and Sir Patrick will do me the justice to remember how willingly I would have avoided the topic."

"Truly, my Lord," said Sir Patrick to his prisoner, "it is too bold to say so much."

At this crisis of the conversation, a bell without was heard, at the sound of which Sir Patrick started up and said—"It is the signal of a barge from Canty Bay, and I must leave you for a few minutes."

"This must not be, Sir Patrick," exclaimed Græme, hastily rising; "I will not be left alone with the prisoner: such a thing in these jealous times might entail ruin upon us all."

"I will nevertheless hazard it," said the old Knight laughing,—"I rely on your honour, Sir Robert, and what have I to fear?" so, hastily quitting the room, he left them together. The moment the door was shut, the Lord Walter threw himself into the arms of his kinsman, and embraced him with ardour and delight.

"Hush, and be calm," said Græme; "we have no time for protestations; we must act, and that alertly: I doubt not that by to-

morrow orders will be received to set me ashore."

"I fear it is impossible to escape from this place," replied the prisoner; and before Græme had time to make any reply, the sound of some person in discourse with Sir Patrick Haliburton, returning towards the door, made them resume their seats, and to feign a shy taciturnity. When it was opened, Keith the Herald entered, and the Constable came after him, pale and much agitated, holding a warrant in his hand which Keith had brought to authorise him to receive the Lord Walter, and to conduct him to Stirling castle, there to abide his trial.

Neither the prisoner nor Græme were in any measure, at first, dismayed by this occurrence; on the contrary, they exchanged looks of confidence, and both, in the same moment, thought that a rescue in the course of the journey might be easily achieved; but it soon came to the mind of Græme, that he

had deprived himself of the means of concerting any such enterprise, by having thrown himself into the place where he then was, and where he was obliged to remain till Sir Patrick Haliburton could be instructed concerning him. Before, however, entering more into his adventure at this time, it is requisite to rehearse the enterprises of the Lord James.

CHAP. XIV.

Bishop Finlay, in the course of a desultory conversation with Glenfruin, interspersed with divers petite goutelles in the Gaelic language addressed to the ladies, the which he delivered with so much engaging ecclesiastical decorum, that it made them almost smile and sometimes look aghast, and marvel why a celibacious man and learned clerk should think and chat so fidgingly of such gregarious pleasantries and recreations,—having ascertained that the chief was of opinion it would not be for the profit of the clan to join in any rebellion at that time, was returning on his shelty, led by his Celtic guards, towards Balloch castle, when the Lord James and the Countess of Ross met, as rehearsed,

on the verdant banks of the lively flowing Leven.

Seeing their meeting afar off from the opposite hills, and wondering at the apparition of such an assemblage, and fearing for himself, because of the nature of his mission to the chief of the Glenfruins, he halted to await what might come to pass. And when he beheld the manner in which the Lord James dashed through the river, and how his followers bore away the Lady Sibilla, and when he heard the outcries of the Countess and her damsels, and witnessed the consternation of the Ross men, he was much troubled, especially when the Celts, who were with himself for a protection, began to scamper down the hill to assist their friends, having no more respect for him than for the shelty on which he sat. In a word, not well knowing what else to do, he resolved to proceed forthwith to Dumbarton, and give out there that he had not only severed himself from the cause of the Lord James

Stuart, but had been instrumental in persuading Glenfruin, that very morning, to refrain from taking any part with the rebellious Prince. At the same time he was not the less secretly minded still to further the interests of the Lord James and the house of Albany by all imaginable means and stratagems,—so urging on the shelty, he proceeded towards the town, which in those days stood around the bottom of the castle.

Those of the train of the Countess of Ross in pursuit of the Lord James, when they saw the four and twenty Celts who were with the Bishop coming so fiercely towards them from the hill, halted, and were alarmed, believing themselves entrapped into some ambuscade, by which pause the fugitive escaped. The others who followed to rescue the Lady Sibilla were still more luckless; for the Lennox men of the Lord James' train threw themselves in-between them and the officer who was bearing her away to the castle, and opposed

the pursuit with a great demonstration of bravery.

Meanwhile the shouts and the cries, which arose on all sides startling the echoes, and the appearance of the officer with the fair Sibilla in his arms coming galloping to the castle, roused the retainers within, and the walls were manned, and a numerous party sallied forth to aid their clansmen. The Ross men, at the sight of this reinforcement advancing to the Lennox men, immediately retreated towards their lady, with whom they made all possible haste to Dumbarton, to implore Sir John Stuart of Dundonald, the Governor, to assist them to revenge the abduction and outrage.

The Knight of Dundonald having a sharp espial on Balloch castle from the time when the Earl of Lennox was arrested, and knowing that the force assembled there would not contend with his in the open field, was the more easily persuaded by the Countess of

Ross to undertake the recovery of her fair niece; and accordingly it was determined that, with a party of his own men and the gentlemen of her train, he should proceed the same evening to Balloch, and demand the restitution of the Lady Sibilla.

Now it came to pass that, soon after this enterprise had been so concerted, Bishop Finlay reached Dumbarton, and riding straight to the castle-gate, alighted, and ascended to the chamber where the Knight was consoling the weeping and afflicted Countess. There he presently won favour and confidence by the tale which he had contrived; and Sir John Stuart greatly commended his zeal and loyalty, and told him of all that he had himself resolved to do that night to revenge the wrong done to the Lady Sibilla, and the contempt which had been shown to the King's authority.

When the bold prelate heard this, he cogitated thereon; and discerning that the gar-

rison of the town and castle would be so weakened by the force which the Knight intended to take with him to Balloch, that they both might be easily won, he bethought himself of sending word to the Lord James thereof, and also, by magnifying the power at Balloch, to induce Sir John to make the garrison he intended to leave still weaker. Accordingly, while sitting with him and the disconsolate Countess, he began to descant of the wonderful hardihood of the Lennox men, and of the invincible intrepidity and fearless dexterity of all the sons of the Duke of Albany, dwelling much on the prowess and bravery of the Lord James in particular,—to all which the Countess of Ross, in the delirium of her grief and panic, bore exaggerated testimony, and so wrought on the Governor, that he resolved to leave the town and fortress in a manner defenceless for that night.

When Bishop Finlay perceived his insinuations work to such effect, he feigned himself

to be more weary by his day's hard journey than he in truth was, and retired forth the castle to the Carthusian college, under pretext of abiding with the brethren till the troubles in that part of the country were so assuaged that he might travel in peace and safety to Icolmkill. But he was not long within the walls of the college when he called before him Friar Mungo, a sturdy and bold servitor, of whose address he had on other adventurous occasions made probation, and to him he thus broke his mind—

"You know, brother Mungo, that it is not befitting men of our peaceful calling to meddle with secularities, and that I have ever, as far as in me lay, set my face against all open or occult correspondence with wicked and evil-disposed persons. Whether the Lord James Stuart is a youth of that character I know not, but I would fain spare the effusion of blood, and therefore, brother Mungo, you will do a Christian office, if, in your own

discreet way, you will go to Balloch and tell him, that the knight of Dundonald, with the Ross men, intends this night to demand, with the main part of all the power now in Dumbarton, the restoration of the Lady Sibilla Macdonald to the care of her aunt the Countess of Ross, and that if he is found in the castle he may be taken. Therefore my counsel to him is, to make preparation instanter to come to me here, while Sir John is on his way to seek him, and I doubt not I shall be able to show him how he ought to comport himself in this emergency."

Friar Mungo greatly lauded the Christian mind and temper of the Bishop, and replied with a smiling countenance,—

"It is a blessed business, my Lord Bishop, and I should lack of religious grace were I not to stir in it with an alert spirit. Be assured, my Lord, I will lose no time till I have delivered your pious counsellings and ghostly admonitions to the Lord James Stuart, for he

stands in the peril of being an instrument of great slaughter among his enemies, who, though they be the adversaries of his father's house, have yet souls to be saved;—and I will learn, before I set off, what road Sir John intends to take, that I may advise the Lennox men to keep another road; for were they to meet, alas! my Lord, there would be an effusion of blood which might go well nigh to break the heart of the Holy Virgin, and greatly disturb the beatitude of the saints that are with her in paradise."

"You have a worthy compassion, brother Mungo," replied the Bishop; "and I doubt not you shall be prospered in this good work; but I am concerned to think what may happen to the Lady Sibilla Macdonald,—poor tender young flower! did you ever see her, brother Mungo?"

"Often, my Lord Bishop," exclaimed the Friar with fervour; "she is the most peerless maiden I ever set eyes upon. The splendour

of her beauty is most ravishing to behold;—her neck is of living ivory, and her bosom, my Lord Bishop——"

"I thought, brother Mungo, that there must have been some cause for this animal eagerness in the Lord James," said Bishop Finlay gravely. "And she is indeed so very beautiful?"

"O verily, my Lord, her presence lends warmth to the air she moves in."

Friar Mungo would have continued to expatiate still more salaciously on the blooming maidenhood of the Lady Sibilla, had not Bishop Finlay, in a tender-hearted manner, said, he thought it would be a most pious duty to rescue her from the danger into which she had fallen.

"Could not you, brother Mungo," said he, "contrive to get her transported from Balloch to the bower in Inchmurin? Thither I would go myself and endeavour to console her till this feud is ended."

"It is softly thought," replied the Friar; "and my persuasion, with your request, shall not be wanting. I will go myself with her in the boat, and see her safe upon the island."

"No, brother Mungo," said the Bishop; "there can be no need of you to go with her; you must hasten back and let me know how you speed."

Friar Mungo at these words withdrew, not the less eager to execute the duty wherewith he had been thus missioned, by the command to urge the Lady Sibilla rather to take refuge in Inchmurin, where the Earl of Lennox had a summer bower, than to return to her weeping aunt the Countess of Ross.

CHAP. XV.

WHILE these machinations of war and subtlety were brewing at Dumbarton, the Lord James had returned to Balloch castle, where he found the Lady Sibilla safely warded, and, though much disturbed and shedding tears, right glad of heart to see him again. Nor was she backward to commend his address and spirit, nor slow to cheer him in the enterprise which, like a loving son and true brother, he had undertaken.

"But," said she, "I cannot conceal from myself the danger to which it has exposed you. The King may be moved to set your father and brothers free, but he will not be so easily moved to pardon rebellion in you."

"I trust and hope," replied the young Lord courageously, "that I shall not stand

in need of his pardon,—for what he has done he may be brought to ask mine. When was it heard of, out of pagan land, that in one day a whole race of princes, the highest of the blood-royal, were denounced for traitors; and all that could be seized of them and their friends committed to prison?—Sibilla, when I see you here, and think in what circumstances you have been brought, and how the sky of our lot has been so clouded, can I have any other heart toward King James, than one of hatred and revenge? But now that I have you in my possession, let us never be parted again. Bishop Finlay, whom I expect here to-night from a kind mission that he went upon yesterday to the chief of the Glenfruins, will bestow his benediction on our union, and we shall thenceforth be man and wife."

The lady Sibilla was as bold as she was beautiful; the pride and valour of her ancestry glowed in her blood; and though she loved her betrothed with the truth and ar-

dour of gentle maidenhood, she could not abide the thought, that the high-born daughter of the Lord of the Isles should be wedded amidst the haste and hazard of an outlaw's adventures.

"No," said she; "though I shall not repine to be detained your prisoner, it neither befits your birth nor mine, to hold our wedding like the mating of a moss-trooper. I have no gentlewoman here to be my bridesmaid; and, under your sentence of outlawry, I know not if a marriage with you may be safely contracted."

"You cannot surely, Sibilla," exclaimed the young Lord, troubled by the doubt which her words implied,—"you cannot surely suspect my fidelity? What ceremony can bind me more to you than I am already bound? If you feel for me as I once did believe you felt, the very dangers in which I am placed should make you but the more eager to share my unhappy fortunes. To stand on forms,

when I may have but a few hours to live, is to sacrifice to an idol what is due to a God. True love, Sibilla, admits of no such cold decorum. It is a living fire, which overcomes all between it and the object of its aspiring flame. It makes me forget at this moment every impending peril, my birth, your condition, all worldly considerations, and to think but of the happy accident that has brought us together—that has made you mine."

The lady hung her head, and sighing at the vehemence of his passion, remained for some time sad and thoughtful.

"You make me no answer," exclaimed her lover. "What am I to divine from your silence? You have said you will not repine to remain my prisoner: why should you be a prisoner with me? Some kinder, dearer name, ought rather to describe your condition. Before the world and Heaven we were betrothed, and, as I thought, a holier tie

than the terms of any human paction united our hearts; but I have been in error; it was not to me, it was to the son of the Regent of Scotland that you were contracted, and the dignity having passed from my father, your love has expired."

"Oh! say not so," cried Sibilla passionately, and in tears. "Think rather of the part which honour, the reverence due to my family, the feelings of my sex, and the helplessness of my condition, require that I should sustain till some friend is present to witness the willingness with which I am ready to prove my faith and my affection."

The Lord James, at these words, would have taken her in his arms; but she rose, and with a proud air said—

"No; that cannot be, my Lord. This is neither the time nor the place where we may yield ourselves to any fond fooling; but I will prove to you that I am not unworthy of the ardent love you profess, and that I will

indeed share your fortunes, though I must refuse at present to be your wife."

Her lover was rebuked by the majesty of her mien; but, hoping from her words that she intended to continue with him, he did not despair of overcoming the severity of her resolution, and often gazing on her for a moment with worship and admiration, he began to smile.

"Nay, my Lord," said she, "do not misinterpret my determination; though I will share your fortunes, and thereby prove my affection, yet shall I not remain with you: I will not, however, so far acknowledge any doubt of my own fortitude, as to say that I fear to remain; but there is an homage due to fame which true love will never grudge, and in separating myself from you I pay that homage."

"In what way then," replied the Lord James, grieved and disappointed, "can you

partake either of the hazards or the dangers that await me?"

"By performing the woman's part; first, by trying to avert both to the uttermost of my influence and ability, and then"—

"What then?" said the impassioned lover, melted by the tenderness of her accent.

"By mourning that I can do no more," she replied; adding more firmly, "It is not wise to think only of ill. The Queen is pleased to consider me as her friend; I will go to Scone, and entreat her benevolence with the King."

"And if he cherish for her," exclaimed the Lord James, "but the tithe of the regard that I bear to you, there is no boon nor favour in his gift that she shall not obtain."

While they were thus discoursing, Friar Mungo, whom Bishop Finlay had sent from Dumbarton, arrived in the castle, and his business being urgent, he was speedily admitted to the chamber where the lovers were

breathing their fond assurances, and fostering their mutual passion by self-denial. He briefly told his message, and urged the young Lord to lose no time, but quickly to array his power and make for the town: "For," said he, "in the evening Sir John Stuart will be here, and his force is triple yours; but were you in possession of the town and fortalice, you might laugh at any power that could for a long time be brought against you."

Then Father Mungo looked towards Sibilla, and added—

"And my Lord Bishop, fair Lady, bade me exhort you not to remain here, but allow yourself to be removed to the summer-lodge on Inchmurin."—

"Why?" cried the Lord James, surprised at this message.

"I will speak freely," replied the Friar; "for I doubt not, from what I see, that the Lady Sibilla is not averse to remain in the custody of her betrothed bridegroom."

The lady, however, checked this bold familiarity, and requested to know, why it was that Bishop Finlay would have her treated as a prisoner?

"For the safety of our dear young Lord," said Friar Mungo humbly. "If any reverse ensues from the expedition, he would have you, Lady, retained as an hostage by the Lennox men. As it is, the possession of you is something upon which to claim terms."

The lady smiled at hearing this, and looking towards her lover, said—

"Is it so soon that I must begin to perform my promise? But glad I am, my Lord, that it is so. Yes, it is right to hold me as an hostage, and I shall rejoice that, by being in that condition, I may in any degree contribute to make the Macdonalds and their friends interpose their influence with the King in favour of the house of Albany."

It was accordingly soon arranged, that Friar Mungo should convey the beautiful

Sibilla in a boat to the bower on Inchmurin, while the Lord James proceeded, under cover of the woods on the banks of the river, with the garrison in the castle, towards Dumbarton.

CHAP. XVI.

WHILE Bishop Finlay and the Lord James Stuart were ripening their machinations, the King being informed of the same by a messenger from Glasgow, as before rehearsed, gathered his powers hastily together, and was advancing to frustrate their rebellious devices.

On the afternoon of the same day on which the Bishop missioned Friar Mungo to Balloch castle, his Majesty reached Glasgow, where he was minded to stop that night, and to come on next morning to Dumbarton; but learning there, that his traitorous kinsman was not in any great force, he resolved, after refreshing the army, to go forward in the evening, in order to come upon the Lord James before he was well prepared to resist

him, and so to end a rebellion, the issues of which no man could foresee, who well considered the potency, number, and spirit, of the chiefs and nobles in factious league with the house of Albany.

Thus it came to pass, about two hours after set of sun, that while the worthy Knight of Dundonald, Sir John Stuart, with the garrison and many valiant burghers of Dumbarton, was advancing up the east side of the river Leven to attack the Lord James in Balloch castle, and while that adventurous young Lord, with the vassals and retainers of the Earl of Lennox, was coming unseen towards the town, through the woods and dingles that skirted the western margent of the stream, the King left Glasgow with the intent of reaching the loyal borough before midnight; so that, notwithstanding the sinister wisdom of Bishop Finlay's device, by which he expected to throw Dumbarton and its impregnable castle into the hands of the Lord James,

divers motions and stirrings were coming to a head, by which that hardy young Prince was likely to be brought into woeful hazard.

Meanwhile, the bold and stout Friar Mungo, wholly intent to convey the beautiful Sibilla to Inchmurin, there to abide the event of the night, had provided a boat on the skirt of the lake to convey her from the shore to the island; and having so done, he returned to the castle soon after the departure of the Lord James with his force, and brought the weeping and trembling lady forth to conduct her to the place of embarkation.

By this time the twilight had deepened into the shadows of night;—the mist lay heavy on the hills;—Benlomond was wrapt up in a mantle of gloomy clouds, like a wizard meditating a spell;—the spirit of the winds darkened on the waters and moaned in the woods; and the boatmen, as they lay on their oars waiting for the friar and the lady, sometimes churmed a low and melancholy cronach,

each to himself apart, and sometimes they would all suddenly be still and listen, and then inquire at one another, if it was not a shout which they had heard.

The path from the castle to where the boat lay was through a scattered wood of natural oak, the overarching boughs of which made it as dark as midnight; and Friar Mungo, as he led the lady by the hand, and from time to time turned back to cheer her, often banned the briers that caught the skirts of his cloak, more like a borderer than a holy priest engaged in ministrations of charity.

When they came nigh to the shores of the lake, a drizly shower began to fall, which made Friar Mungo bid the Lady Sibilla halt under the shelter of the trees, while he went forward to prepare the boat for her reception; and the better to shelter her from the damp air of the night, he stript himself of his friar's cloak, and lovingly wrapt it about her, infolding her in his arms with a gentle pressure to

his breast, thus manifesting his compassion for her very piteous estate.

"Bonny Lady Sibilla," said a strange voice softly in her ear as soon as he had left her; and in the same moment a hand from behind the tree gently touched her on the shoulder.

"Who are you?" exclaimed the Lady, startled and terrified.

"Wheesht," said the stranger, "wheesht. Dinna be fear't, bonny Lady Sibilla; I'm but Anniple of Dunblane."

"Anniple! What has brought you here?" cried the Lady aloud, forgetting the admonition which she had just received.

"Wheesht,—wheesht," was the answer; for Anniple at the same moment stretched forth her hand and laid her fingers on Sibilla's lips, while she added—

"Ye're in the black of a shadow, Lady, the ill may pass, and it will na maybe."

"What mean you, Anniple?" replied Si-

billa, in some degree quieted by feeling herself in the presence of one whom she had formerly known, though it was but the witwandered Spaewife.

"There's a foul thought in the Friar this night," said Anniple; "I heard it in his breathing—I saw it in his gait;—but gi'e me the cloak that he has given to you."

At that moment, the rustle of Friar Mungo returning was heard; and presently also the oars were heard moving the boat nearer towards the spot where the pathway emerged from the wood.

The boat stopped—the Friar hastened to Sibilla—and a sound, deep, low, and murmuring, came drearily from afar off. One of the boatmen starting from the seat-board, rested one hand on his oar, and placing the other to his ear, in order to catch with more than the apert sense the rumour of the distant noise, remained listening, till one of his companions called his attention to the Friar

returning with his agitated charge, who, as she approached the boat, drew the cloak he had so kindly lent closer around and over her head.

Friar Mungo spoke to her soothingly, but she made no reply. He assisted her into the boat, and she sat down abruptly, but spoke not.

The Friar, as soon as she was seated, also went on board, and placed himself in the most encouraging manner by her side. The boatmen rattled their oars between the thole-pins, and pushed into the bosom of the lake. The skies were lowering, and the wings of the wind rainy;—the water broke black beneath the oars; and the blast, as it swept over the dark water, made the heart cower. It was a night to make helplessness feel its desolate condition, and weakness to cling to any protection. The boatmen plied their oars in silence. Friar Mungo, of all on board, was the only one that spoke; and his

voice was gay. Often did his arm hover behind the lady that sat muffled beside him, as if he would have drawn it round her waist, and gathered her gently towards him; but reverence for the high condition of Sibilla awed the emotions with which he commiserated her lone estate.

As the boat proceeded towards Inchmurin, his reverential compassion however became more familiar; yet even to the purring kindness and solicitude which he breathed into her ear she made no reply, which surprised him so much, that he was emboldened thereby to raise his hand to lift aside the cloak in which she had infolded her head and face; but judge of his consternation, when the Spaewife flung her hands round his neck, exclaiming with a shrill ecstasy,—"Ah! ye loon, ye loon, ye loon!"

Friar Mungo threw himself back from the enclaspings of her skinny arms; and while she chuckled and chattered at the fright she

had given him, he growled with wrath and disappointment, and ordered the boatmen to return back and make for the nearest part of the shore. They accordingly did so; and when they were come to the foot of Glenfruin water, he seized Anniple by the arm, and dragging her from the bench whereon the harmless creature was sitting, cast her like a bundle of lumber overboard upon the strand, and commanded the mariners instantly to push off. They could not however do this so quickly, as to prevent Friar Mungo from hearing the malaisons of Anniple; for, though somewhat stunned by the shock, she soon scrambled to her feet, and vented her anger against him in many a wild imprecation, wherein she denounced him to the wuddy, the wave, or the well.

CHAP. XVII.

As soon as it was dark, the Knight of Dundonald, with his own power and the Ross men, set forward on their expedition against Balloch castle. He had not, however, long departed, when a rumour reached Dumbarton that the rebels, with the Lord James at their head, were approaching, and fearful was the panic that arose in the town at the tidings.

The inhabitants burst, as it were with one accord, out of their houses into the streets, and there was a rushing and a hurrying to and fro, and cries, mingled with much talk, and marvelling, and great alarm;—mothers ran with their children they knew not whither; many laden with moveables hastened into the fields; the burghers armed themselves with what weapons they could find; infirm old men

stood in groups communing at the corners of the streets; windows were lifted up, and all fires were extinguished; bells rung and drums beat, and ever and anon a wail and shriek was heard, and a murmuring more terrible than the shouts of a tumult or the sound of any woe.

The Countess of Ross, in the consternation of the first alarm, ascended with her maidens to the highest parts of the castle, and stood long anxiously looking up the Leven; but the moon was down, and the night was dark, and she could discern nothing, save where the town-lights threw a dusky glare on the rugged cliffs of Dunbuck, and brought them gloomily into view, like the frowning forehead of some old and dreadful preadamite that hath its dwelling-place in everlasting darkness.

"What time is it, think you?" said the Countess to one of her maidens on whose arm she was leaning.

"It cannot be far from midnight; but not a star has peeped out to-night," replied the damsel, "and I have not heard the clock."

"It is a fearful time," resumed the Countess, "and the rebels cannot be far off;—see you how those lights collect and cluster together!—now they are scattering again! one is borne along in great haste. It is quenched!"

"The air strikes raw and cold here," said the damsel after a short pause; "will it not please you, madam, to return to your chamber?"

The Countess made no reply, but sat down on a ledge of the rock, and drawing her mantle close over her head, rested her chin on her hand, and continued looking in the direction by which the enemy was expected to come, and began to ruminate and sigh; which her three maidens and the matron who was their superior perceiving, gathered around, and began to discourse with each other, to comfort themselves and to draw their mistress from

the sadness wherewith she appeared to be so heavily oppressed.

" I hope and trust," said one, " that we have nothing to dread. The king will be hither before the rebels, and though they may sack the town, they cannot win the castle."

" What will become of us," added another, " if they should, however, by force or fraud, get possession of the castle ?—not one of us will be spared."

" We shall be left alive," replied the matron, " that I do not doubt; for I knew a lady that was in Roxburgh when it was burnt by the Earl of Marche. Poor soul ! She told me that it was of no use to think of resisting."

" Ah me !" cried the one who spoke first, " what may have been done by this time to the sweet Lady Sibilla !"

" Surely," said the second, " the Lord James would do her no harm."

" Cease this idle prating," exclaimed the

Countess, "and think more seriously of the perils with which we are surrounded. This is neither a fit time nor place for such frivolous discourse. It is now midnight,—the hour when Guilt and Treachery violate the universal confidence with which all nature receives the peaceful night. Conspirators now meet in lone and dismal places, and band themselves with oaths sworn in whispers. It is the time which, even in safety and peace, ought to move your spirits to more solemn reflections. The very thought of Sleep, lying down suspicionless in the lap of so blind a warder as Darkness, like an innocent child confiding in its aged nurse,—might touch your hearts with the ruth of gentle sympathy for the defencelessness in which half the world lies now fettered and exposed. Yet those in that state are more to be envied than they who are awake and abroad at this hour. Who would exchange the condition of the weary hind, as he lies on the ground blanketed with straw,

a breathing clod, through the fog of whose dense slumbers the twilight of no dream ever breaks—so much does hard labour drug with insensibility the poor man's rest;—who would exchange his lot for that of the undivulged offender trembling on his bed of down? I was once told of an ermined judge, that was shaken awake at this hour from beneath his canopy of honours, by the vision of an old and wasted wretch whose sentence he had pronounced the day before. In his dream he beheld her strangely changed into one whom in his youth he had thought passing fair, and whose beauty he was himself the first that sullied with shame, and he fell thereafter into an absent melancholy, and, it is said, he never went to sleep any more. Think also, that haply at this hour some dying man may chance to awake from his perturbed slumber, and see the wife who seemed to attend him so kindly, sinking asleep in her chair beside his pillow, regardless of his last sighs, and he speechless

and powerless, and by no stir nor sign able to rouse her. Such things and thoughts would better become your conversation at this time and in this place. Or ye might think of some fretted mother, chiding her wakeful and peevish baby, and pressing it, even in her anger, still more dearly to her bosom. Go to, ladies, ye lack of charity, and list not to the sermon which the midnight teaches. Ye speak of outrages, almost as if ye desired they might be. Shame on this girlishness! O I could make your hearts weep drops of pityful blood, by a tale that was told me of a poor outcast and ruined maiden in a foreign land! Once at this terrible hour, after a woful course of sin, the sense of her fault and abject condition came so strongly upon her, that she went and laid her head on the threshold of her betrayer's door longing to die, and she saw the chariots of once kind companions returning from revels, where she could never enter,—but her heart would not break, nor her eyes shed any tear. As she lay there,

the gallant, who had brought her to that sad estate, coming home, ordered his serving-man to cast her from the door; but, when they went to move her, she was dead. Alas, gentlewomen! why, on such a night as this, should I have had such cause to rebuke you with such tales? Yon stern and harsh sentinel, as he solitarily paces the wall, is, I doubt not, at this time ruminating more piteously than you have done. I knew an old knight who had been in Palestine, and he told me of a fierce soldier whom he once, on visiting his post at midnight in a fortress in the Isle of Cyprus, found weeping like a child; and, on inquiring the cause of such singular tenderness in one of his mettle, he told him that he had been thinking of the time when he was a playing boy, with the freedom of his father's house, to which he could never return, and the remembrance had made him sorrowful. And yet, ye who are women, made of a softer mould, can stand here at the

dead of night, hearing the panic and terror that rage among yon defenceless burghers, and chat of the horrors of a town sacked as glibly as a seamstress of some giggling girl's incontinence. Fye, fye.

"Hark! hear ye that? They are come!" exclaimed the damsels, directing their eyes towards the town. The Countess started up, and hastened to the wall where the sentinel was walking. He had stopped for a moment on hearing the wild cry which had interrupted the Countess, but before she reached him, he was again slowly and with his accustomed strides pacing the wall.

"What think you was yon dreadful outcry?" said the Countess and her gentlewomen, as it were with one voice.

"I suppose the enemy has entered the town," said the veteran, without halting or altering his slow and measured pace.

One of the ladies went to question him more particularly, but his answers were gruff and unsatisfactory.

"It may be Sir John Stuart come back," said the Countess to him.

"It may be," replied the soldier; "but I don't think so."

"What is your reason for being of that opinion?" inquired the Countess.

"You heard the cry as well as I did; every body might know what that meant," was the sentinel's answer, which he spoke in the same rough manner, and without altering the regularity of his step.

"Holy Virgin! what shall be our fate?" cried the elderly matron, the superior of the Countess's gentlewomen. The soldier laughed in scorn of her terrors; but another wild and shrill shriek, followed by a loud and trampling sound, and a continued cry, and the sudden extinction of many of the lights in the town, silenced for some time all farther parley. The sentinel stood still,—the women trembled,—and the Countess, retiring a little way, sat down again on the rock, and covered her ears

with her hands, to deafen herself from the shouts, and the raging noise and fearful cries, that every moment grew louder and wilder in the town below.

"The work has begun," said the sentinel to the ladies, and attempted again to pace the wall as before; but his steps were now sometimes short and quick, sometimes slow and firm, and now and then he halted and looked and listened.

"I did not expect," said he, "that the town's-folk would have made any resistance. It's brave of them, however."

At that moment a loud and general shout arose from another side of the town, opposite to where the tumultuous noise had begun, and the soldier clapped his hands with joy, and cried, "Our men have returned! Now the rebels will have play for the game."

Scarcely had he said the word, however, when a thick smoke arose in different parts of the town, and it was soon evident that the

rebels had fired the thatch roofs of several houses.

"Well; I'm glad of this," said the soldier: "they mean to let us see something."

"Glad!" exclaimed the Countess, coming again towards the rampart,—"they have fired the town!"

"They have," replied the sentinel, stepping briskly out, as the spreading flames shed a red and dismal light on mountain, tower, and tree, making the waters of the Leven and the Clyde seem as if they were of blackness, mingled with fire.

As the burning brightened, the rage and the roar of the battle in the streets grew fiercer and louder, and the fighting was as manifest as if it had been under the mid-day sun. The glimmer of the swords, in the light of the flames, was like the sparklings from the hammers of a thousand forges, and where the brave burghers had bolted their doors and fenced them within, the Lennox men battered

with stakes of timber, the sound whereof was as the sound of many anvils amidst the crashing of a sudden destruction.

While the fighting was in its utmost fury, and the conflagration was rushing from house to house, and flapping its wings of flame as it were in triumph and exultation, as roof after roof sunk in under the gloomy towers of smoke and fires that reached to the clouds, one of the ladies, by the glare of the burning, which dismally lighted up all the surrounding country, and showed the neighbouring fields strewed with household goods and troops of women and children, discovered the King's army from Glasgow rapidly advancing. It was soon evident that the news of the royal approach was known in the town, for the Lennox men began to flee in different directions, and a bark that lay at anchor under the castle was seen hastily unmooring. The Countess herself saw the Lord James and Bishop Finlay, as it passed along, stand-

ing on the deck, escaping from the vengeance which they had provoked, and with which their raid was so speedily overtaken.

CHAP. XVIII.

The Lady Sibilla, after the departure of Annipl e with Friar Mungo, stood for some time trembling with the timid fancies natural to a young and delicate maiden left alone in a dark and solitary place. Scarcely did she venture to hope, that she might be able to find again the path by which she had been brought from the castle; nor was she willing to return, even could she have found it, lest she should fall into the hands of Sir John Stuart. To remain in the gloomy wood till morning, was also very dismal to think of; for every stir she heard around made her shudder, and fancy it the passaging of some cold and crawling inhabitant of the brake or fen. But where, or which way could she go? If she went farther into the wood, she might wander herself into

greater dangers than those with which she was already environed. To walk the margent of the lake seemed her only choice; but when morning was come, what could she then do? Her fears swarmed as she ruminated; and she began to pace the shore in a very disconsolate and wild manner, unconsciously moving in her distress farther and farther from the spot where she stood at first, till she approached the banks of the Leven, and was surprised by the sound of the rushing water near her, which she had not remarked before.

She stopped and listened, and while standing on the river's brink, she perceived a fiery dawn kindling in the air, and heard, from time to time, the far-off sounds of tumult and commotion breaking through the stillness of the night. It was the battle and the burning of Dumbarton, which she soon understood; and other thoughts and cares than anxiety for herself then arising, she hastened down the river's bank, to see, to listen, and

to learn how it fared with the enterprise of her lover.

She had not proceeded far, when she discovered, by the dim blaze of the distant conflagration, a boat fastened to the bank, on board of which she quickly stepped, and untying the rope by which it was held, allowed herself to drift down the placid current.

An eddy of the stream, however, soon carried the boat to the opposite side, where, the bank being smooth and open, she landed, and continued to hasten towards the town, the blazing roofs of which had by this time awfully lighted up the surrounding hills.

While thus hurrying forward, she fell in with bands of women and children flying from the scene; but to her inquiry they only replied with their own terrors and alarms, and hastened away they knew not whither. At last she came to a spot where an aged man and his wife, unable to travel farther, had sat down to rest themselves; and the old man told

her, with some moderation of grief, that the Lord James had entered the town, but that Sir John Stuart having come back soon after, the Lennox men set fire to the houses, and were sacking and herrying without ruth, remorse, or any touch of human pity. But his wife was demented, and ever and anon, as she watched the growth and progress of the burning, she shrieked with the voice of despair, and clapped her hands, and bewailed the desolation of their dwelling.

The Lady Sibilla was not, however, long permitted to condole with these unfortunate persons; for the rising flames being seen over all the country, a band of the Glenfruins, headed by their young Chieftain, came down from the mountains to watch what chance they might have of spoil by hovering on the skirts of the town. As soon as she saw them draw near, she was encouraged by their appearance, and making herself known, entreated to be conducted to a place of safety,

where she might await the issuse of the contest. The young Chieftain, proud to aid so high-born and so fair a lady, readily acceded to the request, and proposed forthwith to guide her to Glenfruin; but the night being far spent, and she was already so much harassed by what she had endured as to be then unable to undertake so long a journey, therefore he could only assist her to a sheiling on the neighbouring hills, in which, having spread a couch of plaids and heather, he warded her with his men without, while she endeavoured to compose herself to sleep within.

Meanwhile, Friar Mungo, after the abhorrence with which he had cast Anniple overboard, having sailed into the bosom of the lake, found himself much perplexed. He durst not venture to return to Balloch Castle, lest he should find it in the possession of the Knight of Dundonald, and he bewildered himself with vain guesses concerning the accident, for such he deemed it, by which he

had brought away the loathly Spaewife instead of the beautiful Sibilla.

In this perplexity, as he at one time directed the boatmen to make for Inchmurin, and at another for the shore, he, too, beheld the reddening glare of the burning town, and, much aghast and apprehensive thereat, he knew not what course to take, but was altogether overwhelmed with anxieties and fears. In this state of alarm and consternation, he happened to observe a glimmering light high on the shore; and inquiring where it was, and being told that it was in the castle of Glenfruin, he resolved to go thither, and address himself to the hospitality of the Chieftain, of whom he had some knowledge and acquaintance. He was accordingly landed as nigh as possible to the castle, and reached the gate shortly after the departure of the young Chieftain on his expedition. Having made himself known to the warder, he was at once admitted, and guided into the hall, where Glen-

fruin and four or five of his stalwart kinsmen and guests were still sitting at the board, and engaged in a vehement controversy concerning the exploits and pedigree of the Macfarlane of Finnart, a son of whom had made matrimonial overtures for one of Glenfruin's daughters. A wooden stoup stood on the board before them, from which they, as need required, filled a horn to refresh themselves; and the name of the drink which they were drinking came therefrom to be itself called horn, a word which, in the language of the Celts, signifies the life of feasts. The visages of Glenfruin and his friends were shining and flushed; their eyelids were heavy, but their eyes glittered and twinkled in a very lively manner, and the words of their discourse were cumberous, and often conglomerated in the utterance.

"Sowlls and podies! Faider Mungo," said the Chieftain as the Friar entered, "and will ye be tere te night? Sowlls and podies! and

whar will ye pe travel? Sa ye te toun purning? Sowlls and podies! Faider Mungo, a praw ting, tat's for te laads wi' te Lord Hemies. Sowlls and podies! put when te King comes—oomph."

A seat on a form by the fire was set for the visitor, and a horn of horn was filled for him, of which he slightly tasted, and placed it at his elbow, while one of the sorners in the hall brought him some cold venison for supper.

While he was eating, a lean and yellow hand, stretched from a dark corner behind him, took the horn away, and presently replaced it on the table. Glenfruin, the only person present who observed this, looked round with one of his expressed oomphs, and a smile appeared to brighten amidst the austere wrinkles of his hard features, like the tufts of the tardy verdure of spring among the seams and rents of his native rocks.

"Sowlls and podies! Faider Mungo," said

he, with a significant wink to his compeers, "is't a-to-be-surely that ye'll no pe trinking te horn."

The Friar took it up, and in raising it to his lips, surprised to find it empty, looked shrewdly and queerly at Glenfruin; but the Chieftain, without affecting to notice him, exclaimed—

"Sowlls and podies! and ye'll no ha'e gotten a ca'ker yet?" on saying whilk he took the horn and filled it, and while the Friar resumed his eating, he placed it again beside him, and looked round to the dark corner whence the skinny hand had come forth, and presently the horn was again taken away, and again replaced as before.

"Pe pleasured, Faider Mungo," said Glenfruin, "to tak te drink. Sowlls and podies! we're al waiting for't, Faider Mungo—oomph."

The Friar again took hold of the horn, and glancing his eye into it before raising it to his mouth, he smiled, and seemed at a loss to un-

derstand what such a mysterious evasion of the liquor portended.

"Sowlls and podies! Faider Mungo, has te proonie ta'en away al te horn?—oomph."

"Broonie!" exclaimed the Friar alarmed. "Jesu Maria! is there such a spirit about this house?"

"Oo', aye, it's a to-be-surely tat we hae a proonie, Faider Mungo—oomph."

Before the Friar had time to inquire farther, a loud and wild laugh behind made him start aghast to the opposite side of the fire, and in the same moment the Spaewife came forward into the light, and made towards him with outstretched arms to embrace him in a facetious manner. But suddenly pausing as she advanced, her gestures altered, and she bent forward and looked at him for a short space, and then turned away shuddering with horror.

"Sowlls and podies! Anniple o' Dunplane!" exclaimed Glenfruin, rising from his seat in

evident terror; "and will ye pe seeing wi' te second sight, and what will ye pe seeing? Sowlls and podies!—oomph."

"He has a head, yet saw I nane," replied Anniple, looking askance at the pale and frightened Friar; "and where it is and should have been. Och, och, dinna speere!" and then she began to sing in her careless heedless manner,—

"And bold Sir Altan he bent him down,
And he drew his sword so bright,
And wi' ae flash o't, through banes and brains,
He cleft the head o' that Knight."

In the sequel it came to a hearing, that Anniple, who was in the practice of roving over the country, and well known in consequence, both in town and tower, had, after the Friar so uncivilly threw her ashore, gone to Glenfruin's gate, and obtaining admission, had made her quarters good in the castle. There were indeed few places where she was more reverenced than in the hall of Glen-

fruin; and she had but just gathered herself up into a knot in a corner behind the Chief to sleep, when Father Mungo arrived. It also came to pass, that Glenfruin discerning there was some cause of controversy between the Spaewife and the Friar, sifted them in his own way, by which he acquired at last some account of the Lady Sibilla's abduction; and suspecting that Father Mungo was more in connexion with the rebels than he pretended to be, he addressed himself more particularly to him, leaving Anniple to retire again to her corner.

"And so, Faider Mungo," said Glenfruin, "and will ye pe on a spial for te side o' te Lord Hemies?—oomph; put, sowlls and podies! Father Mungo, what will te King say?—oomph. Laads! laads!" exclaimed the Chieftain in a loud voice, and presently half-a-score of grim Glenfruins, who were sleeping on the floor at the far end of the hall, came rushing to him. "Laads," said he, "ye'll

tak Faider Mungo, and poot him down intil te hole, and we'll mak a judification te morn."

The Friar began to remonstrate as the sorners laid hold of him to drag him away; but he was soon taught that neither remonstrance nor supplication would avail.

"Sowlls and podies! Faider Mungo," said Glenfruin, "ye'll be going like a civility, or maype we'll mak a judification te night.—Laads, tak him pe te legs and te arms."

So ordered, the Glenfruins seized the unfortunate Friar, and carrying him forth the hall, took him to the mouth of a deep pit, into which they lowered him in a bucket to the bottom, where they left him for the night.

CHAP. XIX.

YOUNG GLENFRUIN, after placing a watch round the shielling where the Lady Sibilla lay, sent down a party of his men towards Dumbarton, to learn how the battle had ended; and about sunrise they returned with the tidings of the arrival of the King, the ruin of the rebels, and the flight of the Lord James and Bishop Finlay, in an Irish bark for Carrickfergus.

While the men were relating the news, the Lady came out of her lowly shed, relieved from the feverish embraces of a troubled and dreamy sleep, by the dissonance of their tongues as they told their tidings.

When informed of what had come to pass, she stood for some time pensive and silent, and hung her head as if her heart had been

wrung and her spirit sick. She then sat down on the thymy bank, and covered her face with her gentle hand, and sighed, and began to weep. The men who were with Glenfruin retired to a distance, reverencing her sadness; but the young Chieftain hung over her, and wist not what to say or do to console her extreme sorrow.

After some time she became more composed, and rising from the ground, she looked towards the town, whereof but the ruins lay smoking around the foot of the castle, and the tears dried on her cheeks, and her beauty became stern; and there was scorn on her lip, and ire in the flashes that lightened from those eyes which hitherto had beamed so brightly with the light of love. "This war is not ended," said she to herself; and she looked round and eyed the young Glenfruin, as if measuring the zeal and bravery of his character; but in another moment she averted her eyes, and looked to the town, and again sat down

on the ground, and nourished the revenge which was new-born to her bosom.

Seeing how much she was agitated with a vehement struggle, the young Chieftain felt himself abashed, and retired towards his men. He was awed by her august mien, and the fortitude with which she contended with herself. Scarcely, however, had he left her, when she turned towards him, and with a smile that was meant to be gracious, but which the vengeful pride of her spirit darkened, as the eclipse does the lustre of the moon, she waved her hand, and beckoned him to draw near.

"Though I cannot doubt," said she, "that the Countess of Ross is with the King, and that immediate search will be made for me, yet will I not go to her, but still proceed with you to the castle, where, when I have conferred with your father, haply I may require your service;" and she smiled upon him again in so meek and gentle a mood, that the wish she had expressed was felt as a com-

mand which he could not but obey; nor indeed was he sparing of his assurances to do all, by art or arm, that she might be pleased to require him to perform.

To this youthful ardour she made no reply, but prepared to go with him to the castle; and though sometimes in the journey along the sides of the hills she endeavoured to discourse with him of light and indifferent themes, her thoughts ever wandered to the blasted fortunes of her lover,—sometimes she lingered behind and melted into tears, and sometimes her step became proud and her carriage resolute, and she pressed forward with the dauntless spirit of the Lords of the Isles.

The young Chieftain, as soon as she intimated her intention of still going with him to the castle, sent forward a messenger to apprise his father that the daughter of Macdonald was approaching, in order that all might be duly in readiness for the reception

of so honourable a guest. Thus it happened, that when they ascended the hill on which the castle stood, Glenfruin himself, with his wife and daughters, and all the inhabitants of his hall, were marshalled before the castle-gate in their gayest attire.

Lady Glenfruin and her two daughters stood with their fingers daintily pressing their bosoms; and with erect heads, and visages endeavouring to smile, they solemnly sank themselves down to the ground, and pausing for a moment in the elaboration of their homage, they then slowly ascended into the stately steadfastness of their first position. The Chieftain himself advanced, cap in hand, to meet the Lady Sibilla, and brushing the ground with his bonnet as he bowed in giving her welcome, said—

"It's a consternation of pleasantries, mi laidie, that ye will pe coming al pe yourself, mi laidie, for an honour to the shielling of Clanfruin." In saying which, he glanced

with a majestical eye to the magnificent castle of three windows, two turrets, and a single lum. "Sowlls and podies, mi laidie! he continued, "is't a to-be-surely, tat ye're wi' a nopody, and a naething put yourself here?—Oomph."

The Lady Sibilla paused for a moment, and looked around with a disconsolate eye on all that scene of their utmost grandeur which the Glenfruins exhibited; but quickly subduing the anguish of the moment, she replied to the Chieftain's courtesy—

"I doubt not, Glenfruin, that you have heard of what has befallen me,—but my father's daughter among Highlanders can only find friends. My desire is to be assisted back to the Queen,—and I throw myself, Glenfruin, on your honour and hospitality, as I did last night, in my extremity, on the gallantry of your son."

"Ooh aye, mi laidie," exclaimed Glenfruin, "te plood and te pones, and al tat of te

Clanfruin pe at your molestation, mi honourable laidie, Seebeila Mactonald.—Oomph!"

"Enough," replied Sibilla. "I can ask no surer pledge for a safeguard than the word of Glenfruin. I give myself to your protection, and you will see me safely restored to my royal mistress, the Queen.

"Sowlls and podies! Laidie Seebeila, is Clanfruin a hallanshaker to make a commodity?—Oomph!—Ye will be pleasured, mi laidie, to come in for an eatible, and 'ten we'll tak you al as ye will; curse tak me, laidie, but we will, every mother's son of us. —Sowlls and podies! daughter o' te Mactonald More.—Oomph!"

The golden ore of Glenfruin's character Lady Sibilla soon perceived, and at the conclusion of this speech she laid her hand in his, and was led by him up into the ladies' portion of the castle, where he left her with his wife and daughter, while he returned to execute the business of the morning in the

hall; which, when he had done, he again went to her, and said—

"Noo, my laidie Seebeila, ye will hae had a confection, and we would gie you a pastime gratis to te pargain, pe a judification—Oomph!—Faider Mungo of Dumbarton.—Sowlls and podies! mi laidie, he's te pe made a tead man; as you know, mi honourable laidie, he's a repellious espial.—Oomph!"

Sibilla knew well the kind of justice administered there, and though, both by what she had observed, and what she gathered from the Lady Glenfruin and her daughters, as instructed by Anniple, she questioned not the justice of the doom pronounced on the Friar, she said—

"But surely, Glenfruin, you will give the poor man time to make some defence?"

"Oo aye,—he would mak a tefence,—oomph!—Put, sowlls and podies! mi laidie, if we would pe hearing tefences, whar would pe te justice o' our judifications?—O, no, mi

laidie, Faider Mungo te man,—he's a killt, tat's a to-be-surely.—Oomph!—Put will te honourable laidie pe pleasured to behold te hanging, for he's a praa strong, and will pe te fish on the hook. Curse tak me put he will!"

While Glenfruin was thus inviting the Lady Sibilla to the pleasure of seeing Father Mungo hanged, one of the sorners belonging to the hall came and told the Chieftain, that the Friar would not come out of the pit.

"Aye," said Glenfruin, "he'll no pe coming out of te hole?—Aye, aye, and so he will no pe willing to pe hang't like a Christian man. Sowlls and podies! tell him frae me, that he will be pleasured to come up and tie a natural death."

The messenger went to the pit, at the bottom of which the Friar sat, and around the mouth stood many of the Glenfruins with Anniple, all looking down at the unfortunate churchman.

"Take care o' your hern-pan, Father Mungo," cried the Spaewife.

"Come up and be hanged, and not anger the Chief," said one of the Glenfruins; but Friar Mungo made no answer, and the man a second time going to report his contumacy, was met by Glenfruin coming himself, who, when he reached the mouth of the pit, looked down and cried—

"Is tat Faider Mungo? And will ye no be pleasured, Faider Mungo, to be hang't in a peaceable—Sowlls and podies!"

"I protest," replied the Friar, "against the whole of these proceedings. How can you think of treating a churchman in this way?"

"Oo aye. Put wha te teevil's to find te fault? Faider Mungo, ye'll just come up and pe hang't, tat's what ye will."

"I will not move from this place—I will not submit myself to any such injustice."

"Sowlls and podies! laads," said Glenfruin,

addressing himself to the sorners around him, "ye will pe taking a pig stane in your twa hands."

"Take care of your pow, Father Mungo," rejoined the Spaewife, while the Glenfruins went to fetch stones.

When they were come back, each with a heavy fragment of rock, Glenfruin went again to the mouth of the pit, and looking down, said—

"And so ye will no be pleasured to come up and be hang't like a Christian?"

"I again protest against this most lawless and absurd proceeding," replied the Friar.

"Laads, fling in te stones," said Glenfruin; and the men threw in the stones. A shriek was heard,—a rattling noise,—then a groan,—and then there was silence.

CHAP. XX.

The speed wherewith the King had gathered his forces, and marched to quench the rebellion in Lennox before it was well kindled, struck such terror into the faction of the house of Albany, that even Sir Robert Græme was smitten with an amazement, that for a time took from him all power to prepare any plan; so strange a thing was it then in Scotland to see the government advance itself without regard to persons or partialities. Being liberated from the Bass isle on the second day after the Lord Walter was removed therefrom by the herald to Stirling, he heard with consternation, that the King had marched against the Lord James and Bishop Finlay, and that, notwithstanding the great head it was rumoured they were making, and which

their friends magnified to intimidate their adversaries, had none slackened the orders given to bring Duke Murdoch, with his sons and the Earl of Lennox, to judgment. So much indeed was Græme confounded by such resolution and alacrity, that, when put on shore at North Berwick, he lingered there, forgetful of the tale of the pilgrimage which he had published, to disguise the intent of the voyage that brought him to the Bass. Nor thought he of the suspicion which he thereby caused to breed against himself, but only felt the frustration of his stratagem as a new incitement to revenge, till awakened from his wonder by the news of the total discomfiture of the rebels at Dumbarton; the which news taught him it would be an ineffectual adventure to attempt at that time any enterprise for the deliverance of the prisoners. He therefore resolved to await in quietude the issue of their trial; and accordingly next day sailed for Crail, and performed his pilgrimage to the

shrine of St Rule, in St Andrews, in a very exemplary manner.

Meanwhile the Lady Sibilla, under the protection of Glenfruin himself, was conveyed to Scone, where the Queen had been left. Her purpose in going thither, was to work upon the benignant spirit of her Majesty, to the end that she might endeavour, with all her blandishments, to mitigate the King's anger against the house of Albany, especially towards the boldest offender in its treasons, her lover, the Lord James.

When she arrived at the Abbey-palace, the Queen was walking in the garden with one of her ladies, and she immediately went to join her there; but, as she approached the spot, the thought of what she had undertaken, the fears and the doubts of the reception she might meet with, for so far overstepping the modesty of maidenhood, in appearing as the declared bride and advocate of an outlaw, made her hesitate to advance. For although Queen Jo-

anna was of a mild and gracious nature, and much inclined by the gentleness of her own heart to entertain all solicitations of mercy and charity, yet was she so strict and pure in the decorum of her sex, that she regarded few faults more rigidly than those which, by their boldness, seemed unbefitting the diffidence that is so comely in woman.

At the time when the Lady Sibilla entered the garden, her Majesty was standing with that renowned maiden and gentlewoman, the fair Katherine Douglas, and very gaily attired, as her custom ever was, in order that she might, by example, teach the ladies and dames of the realm to acquire those habits of courtly manners which are put on with the garments of ceremony. Her golden hair was gathered within a net of pearls, adorned with a precious ruby, and many a sapphire and emerald. On her brow she wore a chaplet of red and white and blue feathers, sprinkled all over with spangles, and intermingled with

jonquilles and sprigs of broom; around the fair enamel of her neck was a golden chain, from which depended a ruby shapen like a heart, which, as it lay on the ivory of her bosom, seemed as if a living fire had been taken from the altar of true love, and laid to beam and glow in that beauteous place. By the one hand she held her robe of lustrous satin loosely up from the dewy grass, and with the other she leant upon the shoulder of Katherine Douglas, smiling on the flowers timidly peering from their buds, as it were to see if the spring was indeed come again.

A little page, who accompanied the Lady Sibilla into the garden, perceiving her hesitation, went forward and told the Queen of her arrival; and her Majesty, dropping the train of her robe, came quickly to meet her, and taking her by the two hands, not only prevented her from performing the accustomed homage of kneeling, but kissed her in a sisterly manner on the cheek; then drawing one of her hands

gently through her arm, she waved to Katherine Douglas to retire, and led her to a bower, where they sat down together. But, notwithstanding all this tenderness and ardour, Sibilla was unable to speak, till her heart was relieved by weeping; at last, encouraged by the soothing sisterliness of the Queen to break the business on which she had returned to Scone, she related the accident of her adventure at Balloch, and thence took occasion to remind her Majesty, how natural it was for her to sorrow and deplore the ruin which impended over the house of Albany.

"Alas! madam," said she, "Duke Murdoch is a man whose simplicity is his greatest fault. He is without guile, and altogether disposed to be harmless, and kind, and good, and, which is the better part of goodness, to think well of every body without adverting to their humour, affection, or prejudices. He cannot have done ill, but as an instrument in the hands of others."

"Then is there," replied the Queen, "the less cause to fear that he will suffer any greater penalty than the arrest under which he now lies; for it cannot be, that, were he found guilty, the King would bring so near a kinsman, and so great a man, in old age, to any heavier punishment; so be not cast down on his account."

"But if your Majesty knew the Duchess," said Sibilla.—

"I have heard great things of that noble lady," replied the Queen, "and I have marvelled that she has never come to see me."

"She is indeed," exclaimed Sibilla, "the paragon of mothers. That she comes not to court is natural, considering how she herself was so long all but in name the queen. It may be of the infirmity of our sex, that she is loath to appear less than she was. Albeit, I do not think so; but rather, that it proceeds from the very excellence of her character, knowing, as she does, that the Duke,

from his easy nature, may have fallen into fault, and grieving for those things in her sons, which, however old as the free usages of the Scottish nobles, accord not with the milder customs that the King so labours to establish, she can have no heart to be at court, where the show of that reverence, which her wisdom would instruct her to pay to his Majesty and your royal self, might be considered with jealousy, as assumed to win indulgence for her children. But were any grace dispensed towards them, I know, from the warmth of her affections, that the winds would be slow to the speed wherewith she would seek to testify her gratitude by throwing herself at your Majesty's feet."

"Then," said the Queen, "rest you assured, that I shall not fail to urge the King so to appease the rigour of justice as to bring speedily such an ornament of womankind to his court."

The Lady Sibilla was for that time content

with this assurance, and their discourse began to be of a less earnest kind.

"Know you, Sibilla," said the Queen, "that our young kinsman, the Lord Robert Stuart, nephew and heir to the Earl of Atholl, and who has but lately, for the first time, come to court, speaks of you with the zeal of a worshipper. I would it might be, Sibilla, that you were free to choose. He is the handsomest gallant that I have yet seen in Scotland; there is not one who, either for carriage, spirit, or courtesy, may compare with him; and not less highly born than the sons of the Duke of Albany."

Sibilla blushed, and for a short time made no reply; then she said softly—

"Does your Majesty forget that I was betrothed to the Lord James, and that, but for this unhappy distraction of fortune which has driven him to such extremity, we should have been married? I may not think of any other."

"Nay," replied the Queen, "it cannot be, that you should know the very excellent qualities of Stuart and not prefer him. There is not a nobleman of his years whom the King so esteems as a companion."

Sibilla again became thoughtful; which the Queen observing, took her by the hand, and said—

"I doubt not that his Majesty could easily obtain from the Pope's Holiness a dispensation to dissolve the contract, by which, in nonage, you were so unfortunately betrothed to the Lord James. I am told, that neither of his brothers, no, not even the libertine Lord Walter, is less deserving of your affection. He is, they say, the fiercest and proudest of the three. Leave him to the issues of his fate, and think of what I have been telling you concerning the adoration of Stuart."

Sibilla's bosom heaved with sorrowful sighs, and the tears rushed into her eyes as she exclaimed—

"Alas! to what am I destined!" and she shuddered, and began to weep bitterly.

The Queen was much surprised to see such violence of grief; but, thinking it arose from the persuasion which Sibilla had of the truth of what she was saying of the Lord James, she endeavoured to console her with the assurance that the King would leave no influence untried to procure a dissolution of the contract.

"Oh! it is not that which afflicts me," cried Sibilla, with the sharp accents of misery. But suddenly exerting herself, she dried her eyes, and said, "I should have more pleasure in knowing that the Duchess of Albany's anxieties were softened by any grace to her family, than in being released from my betrothment to the Lord James."

The Queen, not perceiving the double sense of these words, renewed the assurances of her best and earliest endeavour to procure some abatement of the severe measures which were

in process against the house of Albany, adding,—"But come; I have no will, had I the power, to rule one so discreet and wise as my dear Sibilla in any business of the heart. Let us, therefore, say no more of it at present, but come to my chamber."

So saying, the Queen rose; and taking her by the hand, led her to the gate, and they ascended to the royal chamber, where, with the other ladies of the court, they spent the remainder of the day with the tuneful jingle of the virginal and melodious songs, intermingled with pleasant discourse.

CHAP. XXI.

When the King had restored peace at Dumbarton, he came to Stirling, where, on the night before the day appointed for the trial of his uncle, the Duke of Albany, with his two sons, and their maternal grandfather, the Earl of Lennox, he held a solemn council in the castle, at which the greatest and wisest men then in all the realm met; and a jury consisting of twenty-one peers was nominated, of whom the Earl of Atholl was the first named, being proposed by the King himself.

"I implore your Majesty," said the alarmed Earl, when his name was mentioned, "not to put on me so invidious a duty! Think how near I am of kin to the accused! men will say, if, in my estimate of the evidence that may be brought against them, I fall not in

with the severity of justice, that I favour them because of our relationship, and if I do what justice may require, and find them guilty of their imputed treasons, the opinion of the world will still go harsher against me; for by their condemnation I shall become presumptive heir to the crown."

All present applauded this speech, and seemed to expect that the King would consent to dispense with the service of the Earl at the trial; but his Majesty replied,—

"No, my Lord Atholl; what you object becomes that fame for wisdom which you enjoy in the world; but this awful business requires the assertion of an honour above the world. In so much as you act, as you will do, with no respect for the opinions of men but only for truth, will your name and renown be exalted and spread abroad. The task that I call on you to perform is fraught with an immensity of glory; for there has not been, from all the eras of history, so

magnificent a vindication of law and justice as that which, with the favour of Heaven, we have undertaken to see done."

The peers and prelates around the council-table were smitten with wonder at the voice and manner with which the King spoke; and the Earl rose up, and solemnly laying his hand on his bosom, bowed in reverential silence to his Majesty, and again slowly sat down. When the King added,—

"It is our intention to preside in person, and on the throne, with crown and sceptre. The condition of the prisoners and the greatness of the occasion demand it. No man with less than the dignity royal should sit in judgment on a Prince, who has, like the Duke, administered the royal trust; and who is there that might not be suspected of being factiously swayed against his Grace's friends and family, when it is considered that the King has declared himself the avenger of all such crimes and offences as those where-

with they are charged; and shall moreover, by the forfeitures that may ensue from their condemnation, be so enriched with the means to reward subserviency?"

Thus it was determined, that not only should the King preside at the trial, and the Earl of Atholl be at the head of the jury, but that the jury itself should consist chiefly of noblemen attached by interest and gratitude to the party of the prisoner; so anxious was his Majesty that the world should never have cause to impugn the stern sublimity of his justice.

But though the Earl of Atholl had in so dutiful a manner submitted to the King's command before the council, his heart was much troubled; and when he retired to his lodging in the town, where his lady was, he appeared overcast with thought and care far beyond his habitude, the which had for some time before been singularly reserved and melancholyous.

"Why, my dear Lord, do you keep yourself so much of late apart from all your friends," said the Lady Atholl, "and walk in that manner, with folded arms and knotted brows, as if you nursed the remembrance of some insult or indignity?"

"Indignity!" exclaimed the Earl, as if the thing had been impossible.

"Yes," replied the Countess; "I have of late often remarked, that you require more than the usual homage from your servants, and I am afraid that you have had cause to observe some abatement in their respect towards you. Tell me, I entreat you, my dear Lord, if I have in any thing given you offence, to cause you so to withhold from me the confidence and love that we once and so long enjoyed together."

"It is impossible," replied the Earl, "that I should not be disturbed by those feuds and demonstrations of rebellion which so distract the country? Our young King lacks in the

discretion which should be possessed with authority. He makes his power felt by its pressure; and bears himself onward in the establishing of laws, which, by being written, he regards as superior to the fluctuating wisdom of common opinion, without considering whether the spirit of the age goes along with him. He is like a war-ship, that sails in unknown waters, reckless of the sands and shoals that may be concealed beneath the waves, and of the sunken wrecks that lurk unseen around, prompt as it were with destiny and peril."

"I thought," said the Countess, "that you had approved of all the steps which he has taken to crush the insolence of the Albanies; and, surely, we shall have no cause to repine at whatever he may undertake against them; for by their overthrow our fortunes will be advanced."

"Peace, Margaret de Barclay," replied the Earl fretfully, "you meddle with affairs above

the concerns of women.—Why should we seek the advancement of ourselves at the expense of our kinsmen?"

"Nay, Heaven forbid we should do any such thing," exclaimed the Countess; "but were the family of Albany destroyed, you would then stand next to the King."

"Do you think that I," cried the Earl, "would be art or part in any machination for their destruction? You know not what the King has done to me to-day. He has required that I should head the jury on their trials."

"In that he may have had a care for his own honour and your renown," said the Countess; "for I hope it cannot be thought that you will, either for your own advantage or any other man's affection, swerve from that integrity which has won for you so eminent a name."

The Earl made no immediate answer, but

paced the chamber thoughtfully, with his hands behind.

"If," resumed the Countess, "the task he has put upon you be greater than you feel in yourself the power to accomplish, I pray you, my Lord, not to be enticed by any fantasy whatsoever to persevere in it."

"The thing itself," said the Earl, with a seeming carelessness, "would not trouble me; but who knows what the world may think?"

"Ah! my dear Lord," cried the Countess passionately, "if you did not suspect yourself, you would not so stand in awe of the world. I do, by our long cohabitation and faithful love, implore you not to embark in this business, since it is so equivocal to your conscience."

"What do you mean? What would you imply?" exclaimed the Earl, startled by her observation.

"Oh! nothing, nothing! What should I imply derogatory to your honour?" said the

Countess; and the tears rushing into her eyes, she wept very bitterly.

"I shall grow angry at such peevishness, Margaret de Barclay," said the Earl. "You allow yourself to become fantastical; and with a prying jealousy, alike unworthy of yourself and of me, you put a false and unfavourable colouring on my best intentions. Good Heavens! you would insinuate, that I am plotting for the extinction of the whole of Duke Murdoch's line; though all the world knows, that I alone of the council opposed myself to the proceedings which have now arrived at such a portentous maturity."

"I do not blame you, my Lord," replied the afflicted lady, with a mournful voice; "but I fear that your honour is in great jeopardy. Alas! I can only pray, that it may with yourself escape the risks to which it is exposed."

The Earl made no answer to this kind ejaculation; but retired from the room, and

went straight to the chamber in the castle where the King was sitting alone, pensively looking over the wide landscape that spreads towards all the west; and after some interchange of courtesies becoming their respective conditions, and made flexible by their relationship and his Majesty's favour, they discoursed of the deliberations of the day and the impending solemnity of the morrow.

"I fear," said the Earl, speaking of the prisoners, "that they must all be found guilty; but your Majesty will not teach the irreverent world such a dreadful lesson, as that the sacred rank of princes may be subjected to the ignominy of a public execution."

"If they are found guilty of the crimes laid to their charge I will confirm the sentence," replied the King gravely: "I dare not pardon them. Were I to be swayed by my inclinations in this case, and unjustly use mercy, what offender in Scotland would hereafter, in receiving punishm[illegible] be considered

otherwise than as the victim of a partial tyranny?"

The Earl did not immediately make any answer; but after a short rumination, he said,—

"In those eastern countries, where wisdom and light have their fountain-head, it is said, that when ill-fated or guilty princes are condemned to die, no axe is ever stained with their blood; but at the dead of night a solemn sound is heard pealing through the silence: all then asleep start from their beds, and, listening at their windows, hear afar off the dark and heavy plunge of some awful thing cast into the sea."

The King looked austerely at his uncle, and replied, "I trust to Heaven, my Lord, that I shall ever be preserved from the practice of any usage which makes justice so much like crime. Therefore urge me no more; but let all things be done openly, and before the eyes of God [illegible] man; so that the purity of

our conscience may be discerned in the clearness of our actions."

With this he went and sat down again in the oriel window where he was sitting when the Earl entered, and the latter came away somewhat discomposed by the rebuke which he had received; but seemingly not inwardly much disturbed, that his Majesty should be so resolved to let the law take its course against their delinquent kinsmen.

CHAP. XXII.

In the meantime the Lady Sibilla, abiding with the Queen at Scoone, saw and heard, day after day, that no entreaty nor supplication could move the King from his stern intent to vindicate the laws of the realm and the regal authority; and the hope which she had cherished of obtaining, by the mediation of her royal mistress, some remission of his severity, began, in consequence, to wane and fade, and her spirit was overcast with sadness and despondency.

She, however, still thought that offended justice would be appeased with the sacrifice of one victim, and she was almost content when she heard that the Lord Walter was to be brought first to trial. She augured therefrom, that, as was the opinion of all men he

could not be tried without being condemned, the King would be satisfied with asserting the supremacy of the law over him only, in respect to those notour treasons and offences wherewith he was charged. Accordingly, for several days before the time appointed for the trial, she refrained from soliciting the Queen's favour and influence, either for her fugitive lover or for any of the prisoners; awaiting the issue under clouds of dread and terror it is true, but not so black in their darkness as to shut out every star of hope.

The singular constancy of mind with which that delicate lady, in the interval, resisted all enticements to pleasure and pastime, won the admiration of the whole court; for the motives and causes of her abstinence were well known, and the ill success which had attended her endeavours awakened commiseration and sympathy in every gentle and religious bosom. It began, however, to be remarked, that her beauty was suffering a

change, and that, instead of the bloom and gayety which was wont to beam in her eye and smile on her cheek, the harsh aspect of resentment, like the shadow of a cloud on the summer fields, often lowered in sternness, and that her voice lost the sweet melody of persuasion, and became harsh with the accents, as it were, of reproach and command. In vain did the Countess of Ross, who had by this time returned to Scoone, chide her frowardness, and beseech her to retire for a season to some secluded bower, especially as she had so openly declared her determination not to go back to the castle of her father till the destiny of her betrothed lover was decided by the impending fate of his father and brothers.

But what most drew the wonder of the courtiers and the ladies, was the manner in which, amidst all her anxieties and visible sorrow, she comported herself towards the young Lord Robert Stuart, after his return from

Dumbarton, whither he had gone with the King against the Lord James.

As often as he approached towards her, she was seen to shudder and become pale, but almost in the same moment, by some efforting of inward fortitude, her countenance was blithened, and she welcomed him with the apparent pleasure of one solicitous of regard.

The Queen, observing this, marvelled thereat, and also that Sibilla at no time, nor on any occasion, spoke to Stuart of the unfortunate condition of the princes of the house of Albany, but seemed, as it were with a singular solicitude, to avoid all discourse and controversy of conversation concerning them with him. Yet, notwithstanding, it was plain to her Majesty, as well as to others, that she did some constraint to her own nature, in the affable carriage with which she demeaned herself towards Stuart. Even Stuart himself, admiring her with the fervency

of a fond and young enthusiasm, felt that there was something in her manner which, while it flattered, yielded him no delight. When he was most ardent, and emulous to evince the sentiments with which he was animated, she listened with attention, but it was as if she endured some penalty of the spirit; yet there were times when she would, as it were, wave over him the gracious enchantment of her happiest graces, and make him fancy that his affection was almost returned.

If she looked cold, and retired from his impassioned advances, he felt abashed and mortified; and, in the eclipse of hope which took place on such occasions, he remembered, with something like boding and dread, the admonition of the Spaewife, with respect to the influence that a lady was to exercise over his destiny. But when she wreathed her smiles and charms, as it were, into a corded garland, wherewith he was too happy to be

fettered, he pondered and dreamt but of her, and worshipped no other saint.

Many however thought, that both in the frowns and the favours by which Sibilla so subdued Stuart to become her declared knight and servitor, she was actuated by some deeper motive than the feminine desire of supremacy; and perhaps it was that she did discern qualities in his character, which she thought might prove of avail in some eventual and contingent purpose, especially as none of all the young nobles enjoyed so much of the King's familiar regard, or shared so freely in his pastimes and exercises of recreation.

But time was running on, and the day appointed for the trial being come, the Queen and her gentlewomen, in the evening, sat lovingly in unison, endeavouring, with their melodious lutes and virginals, and the pithier music of discreet discourse, to sooth Sibilla from the melancholious ruminations with

which she was all that day depressed. And it came to pass, while they were so engaged in the royal chamber, that Stuart entered hastily to tell the Queen, that a messenger had arrived from Stirling with the result of the Lord Walter's trial.

In coming into the room he chanced not to observe Sibilla among the ladies; for the setting sun so caused the purple and golden hues of the heraldries emblazoned on the windows to fall, as it were with the sprinklings of a shivered rainbow, upon all things in the chamber, that nothing therein could be distinctly seen at the first glance; and he began to tell, that the Lord Walter had been found guilty of the offences laid to his charge, and that he was immediately condemned to die, and had been forthwith executed on the Castle-hill, to the amazement of the people.

These sad tidings, though not more terrible than her fancy had long prepared Sibilla to expect, so smote her heart, that she ut-

tered a feeble cry, and sunk down upon the floor in a swoon. From this sorrowful syncope she was, however, speedily recovered by the baptismalry of cold water; and the moment that she could again speak, she inquired, with a piercing sadness, what was to be done with the other prisoners.

"Alas!" said Stuart, while he hung over her, himself almost insensible with anguish and horror at the fearful accident he had caused by his rashness, "alas!" said he, "they are to be brought to trial to-morrow."

"Then they too," exclaimed Sibilla, "are no less assuredly the victims of this inflexible sternness." In saying which she made a strong effort to shake off the languor of her trance; and rising from the laps and arms of the ladies, she suddenly quitted the chamber.

The Queen, whose gentle nature was greatly moved by her sorrow, followed her hastily into another room, and began to offer many

kind and tender suggestions to mitigate her affliction, to all which she only said—

"I will this night go to the King himself. This work is too horrible! No measure of justice can require the sacrifice of a whole race. It is but the wrath of Heaven that demands in one sacrifice so many victims. Hitherto I have implored the beneficent mediation of your Majesty to obtain some ray of the royal mercy for these unfortunate princes, but I will now speak to the King in another strain."

The Queen was surprised at the manner in which the Lady Sibilla thus delivered herself; for there was no tone of grief in the accent of her voice, nor any shadow of sorrow on her countenance, but a serene solemnity, manifested alike in the lofty elevation of her speech, the calm of her eye, and the majestical firmness of her carriage.

"I do not oppose your resolution, sweet cousin," said her Majesty after a short pause

and thoughtful interval; "but I would remind you, whether such intrepidity in behalf of the house of Albany may meet the approbation of your own friends. It is a new thing for one so young to step so forward."

"It is a new thing," replied Sibilla, "to behold an illustrious line of princes doomed to be cut off on the ignominious scaffold, and am not I involved in their fate by the strongest of all ties? by the affection that I was encouraged to cherish,—an obligation with which Heaven itself united us. I feel as a daughter and sister of the prisoners should feel, and as such I am irresistibly impelled to stand forward in the thoroughfare of the death and desolation that are rushing in a manner so terrible upon them. My endeavours may in nothing avail the victims; but I am the only friend that dares to adventure any expedient endeavour in their behalf."

The vehemence with which this was said affected the Queen's heart with a sorrowful

anguish, and her Majesty refrained from offering any further remonstrance, but only gave orders to the officers of her chamber to see due preparations made for the conveyance of the Lady Sibilla forthwith to Stirling, and she specially enjoined Stuart and other gallants of the court to be of her guard and company.

CHAP. XXIII.

It was the grey morning before that mournful lady reached the Castle-hill of Stirling, where she alighted from her palfrey and ascended into the inner ward. As she passed towards the King's chambers, she met the Earl of Athol coming from his apartment to proceed with his Majesty to the parliament-hall, where already many of the nobles and a vast multitude were assembled; and the Earl was so startled and surprised at beholding her there at that hour, leaning on the arm of Stuart, that he could make no reply when she entreated him to conduct her, even then, dishevelled as she was by her nocturnal journey, to the royal presence.

"Surely," said she aloud, "it may not be thought that the Earl of Athol is consenting to such an immolation of his kinsmen. I be-

seech you, my Lord, to obtain for me an audience of the King before this bloody work is renewed. It is for your own honour and good name that his Majesty should be counselled to pause. Men will say, if you do not stand forth against these terrible proceedings, that you have sordidly urged them on for your own particular advancement."

The countenance of the Earl grew dark, and he seemed as if he felt the pang of some inward sting.

" I marvel, Lady," said he, " that you so freely venture to set your feminine judgment against the King's wisdom. What his Majesty does he has great cause to do; and as to the opinion of men with respect to me, my oaths, my allegiance, and my duty, all alike admonish me not to heed. Does your noble father know of the advent on which you have come hither? I doubt, Lady, if he would much approve of such unmaidenly forwardness."

"Let it stand, my Lord, between you and your conscience as to the part you perform, and I will answer to my father for mine. But as I came not hither for any controversy, I implore you to gain me admission to the King!"

"That I would do, Lady Sibilla, with a sincere heart, and be glad to second your solicitations, were there any likelihood that your advocacy would in aught avail. But knowing how the King's resolution is rivetted with the determination to vindicate law and justice to the very uttermost, it would be a fallacious thing to carry you into his presence, and but only serve to chafe him into displeasure against us both."

To this Sibilla made no answer, but despondingly hung her head, which Stuart observing, said—

"Perchance, Lady, it will not go so hard with the prisoners to-day as it did yesterday with the Lord Walter:—abide the issue of

their trial, and haply your mediation may then prove of more effect."

Sibilla looked at him for a moment with a glance of scorn and aversion; but almost in the same instant she overcame that movement of indignation, and trimming her eyes with smiles, replied—

"I have pledged myself to a task, I may indeed say that I have undertaken the performance of a vow, and until I see the King, and hear his denial with mine own ears, I shall not be satisfied that I have done all my duty."

"Duty!" exclaimed the Earl of Athol.

"Aye, duty! you know that I am all but in name the wife of the Lord James Stuart—his father is as my father,—his brother as my brother; and until I have done my utmost to avert the calamity that has fallen upon them, I shall be accounted wanting in filial reverence and sisterly affection. Avert, did I say?—alas, that is now impossible! yesterday Lord Wal-

ter suffered. Oh, my Lord! if the King be that good and just man which he is said to be, his justice, however stern, may well be appeased by that princely victim. Therefore I again beseech you to carry me before him. Do me that small favour;—it is a suit which may be conceded to the daughter of Macdonald, for any cause and at any time. In such a cause, and at such time, it is one that she will not forego."

"I join my earnest entreaty," said Stuart, "that you will do so much to satisfy the Lady Sibilla. You see, my Lord, how her heart is bent upon it; and though her mediation prove ineffectual, yet it will be a consolatory delight to her hereafter, to think that she did all, yea more, much more, than all that could have been expected of her, to lighten the misfortunes of such dear friends. I want, indeed, words to express my admiration of the intrepidity with which so gentle a creature has engaged in so bold an enterprise."

"Not bold but merciful," exclaimed Sibilla. "I see friends in jeopardy, and shall I not strive to help them? Alas, my Lord Athol, why do you so set yourself against me? Who will believe that the love of justice alone governs you in this matter? When the family of Albany are cut off, you become heir to the crown. Ah, my Lord, why does your complexion fly? It is so! and are you indeed working out by this cruel justice an underground passage to the throne?"

"She rails," said the Earl aside to his nephew, "and I have no time to listen." With which words he moved to go away, but Sibilla caught him by the skirt of his surcoat, as she exclaimed—

"You shall not leave me so abruptly, my Lord. If you have that honesty which you so well affect, the rave of my distraction will bear no offence in it. In sooth, I will take no denial. The bravery of my fathers has tempered my spirit for this undertaking, and I

shall not be resisted in my resolution to see the King."

While she was thus importunately urging her suit, a stir and a noise was heard, which announced the King's approach.

First came the heralds with their batons and mantles, anon the lords of the privy chamber, then the Earl of Ross bearing the sceptre, followed by the Earl of Angus carrying the crown. His Majesty came after alone, at some distance, his train borne by two fair young pages.

As the Earl of Ross, who was uncle to Sibilla, came forward, she shrunk back for a moment; but her resolution soon overcame that hesitation of maiden diffidence, in so much that when he passed by she met the surprise with which he gazed on her as if she knew him not, or was so rapt in some high contemplation as not to be sensible to the transitory pageant then moving before her.

Her eyes were intensely fixed on the King;

and as he drew near she cast herself at his feet so suddenly, that he recoiled back, and looked at her for a moment with an amaze that was very soon changed to severity. Presently, however, guessing the object she had come to solicit, his countenance saddened with pity, and he gently and graciously took her by the hands and raised her from the ground.

"My good Lord Athol," said his Majesty, "to your care we commit our fair cousin, and when the business of the day is done we shall then ourself confer with her;" and he would have softly passed her to the Earl, but she clung to his arm.

After dropping on his hand a few tears, she cried—

"O no! not yet! your Majesty; hear first what I would say. When your business is finished—alas! it may then be too late."

"I cannot but divine the suit you so earnestly desire to advocate," replied the King; "but, sweet Lady, it were to suppose some

ill fault in a great solemnity, to say that it should be suspended for any particular solicitation or affection. I speak to you as one whose eminent qualities I do not lightly esteem; and I know that you are in this matter borne forward by no common motive. But, till the trial is over, my kingly obligations forbid me to listen to any plea of mercy."

"I did not come for mercy," exclaimed Sibilla, "but to petition your Majesty in behalf of justice, which, in this matter, stands in the imminent danger of being hereafter condemned as cruelty. I doubt not the grievous guilt of the unfortunate princes; but I would supplicate your Majesty to consider what boon shall by their death result to your loving people; for unless good shall therefrom arise there can be no justice, but only vengeance, in commanding more blood to flow than has already stained the scaffold."

The King stood in wonder to hear her speak

after this manner; for, though he was well acquainted with her lofty spirit, he yet thought, from her betrothment to the outlawed Lord James, that she was come to entreat him with feminine importunity for mitigation and pardon.

Seeing him touched by what she had said, Sibilla continued—

"When the Earl of Lennox stands before you, I humbly supplicate your Majesty to call to mind that he is more than fourscore years old. I do not, however, ask that pity should be allowed to plead for his grey hairs. No, my gracious Sovereign, but only that you will note how plainly Heaven has by its own officer—Old Age—served the warrant by which he will soon indeed be taken to answer for all his manifold sins and treasons. That he has offended his country and your Majesty may not be doubted, but what better judge can arbitrate the sad question of his guilt than the Ancient of Days, who, with a shin-

ing hand, opens the everlasting clasps of the book of life?"

The King, moved by the tenderness of this piteous advocacy, seemed for a moment to relent from his stern sublimity; but at that juncture a solemn peal from the trumpets without recalled him to the awful sense of his regal task, and he laid his hand on his heart, and bowing his head to the suppliant, moved mournfully and slowly to the hall of judgment.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE trial lasted all day, during which the Lady Sibilla, afflicted with grief and fear, and many a fiery sting of despair, sequestered herself in an upper chamber of the castle, inaccessible to all but her maidens—whom, ever and anon, she sent to inquire how the Court was proceeding.

Sometimes she received for answer, that the witnesses prevaricated, and that it was thought the prisoners would be assoilzied—at others, the poor damsels returned weeping, and sat down beside her in silence, and then her heart beat audibly, and she spoke not to them till after a season had passed, when she bade them go and inquire again.

In this mournful condition the day passed, and the shades of evening began to fall, and

still she had received no assurance to her hopes, nor were her fears darkened deeper than in the morning. In the gloom, however, of the twilight, a rustling was heard among the multitude, that covered in clusters all the Castle-hill, and the sound of trumpets soon after announced that the session was ended, and that the King was returning from the hall.

On hearing this noise and clangour, Sibilla rose from her seat and rushed towards the door; but, in the same moment, as if she had been arrested by some invisible hand, she suddenly stopped and looked round, and gasped with horror. Her maidens ran to her assistance—but she fluttered her hands at them, and cried, "Go, go!" They knew that she desired but to learn the issue of the trial, and they hastened out of the room, wishing that they might obtain some encouraging tidings. But they did not return.

The twilight was now fading away, and,

save a deep and solemn murmuring from the waves and movements of the multitude without, Silence, clothed with the shadows of night, stole from the lonely mountains into the hamlets of the social valleys.

In the meantime, Sibilla had retired into the obscurest corner of the chamber and sat down; but, though thirsting to know the doom of the prisoners, her will was fettered as with the incubus of the nightmare, and her spirit appalled with fantasies more dismal than the unblest imaginings of a guilty conscience, and she remained as still as an alabaster effigy on a tomb.

In this woeful state, she heard a universal rustle from the multitude, as if a sudden gale had passed over the leafy boughs of a wide forest: the light of a torch from the court below then flashed against the ceiling of the room. A low and smothered noise and whispering arose, and a sound of many feet moving slowly onward. She listened—at

that moment the tolling of a bell made her start from her seat—she rushed to the window—she could discern nothing distinctly, but there were torches, and soldiers, and spears glimmering, and here and there a face fearfully brightened by the glare of the torches. Yet she could see that all was moving forward, like the waters of the river's tide in the darkness and solemnity of the night. And anon she beheld, in the gloom, a sullen and terrible form walking alone, as if eschewed by all, and his arms were bare to the shoulder, and he carried a gleaming axe. Then came a youth of a noble air and haughty carriage, whom she soon discovered to be the Lord Alexander. He, too, was alone; and the soldiers that lined the way followed him with admiring eyes as he passed. The next that came was Duke Murdoch, leaning on the arm of Bishop Wardlaw; and they passed, and then there was a void for some time; but soon a mournful breathing of compassion

was heard, and the guards fell backward, and turned aside their heads to shun the sight that was coming. Sibilla darted towards it a fearful momentary glance, and she saw an old and palsied hand, bearing a crucifix, coming totteringly forward.—It was the aged Earl of Lennox, accompanied by a priest, whose arm he grasped for support, as with feeble and faltering steps he passed slowly along.

Sibilla was so melted by the sad sight, that she wrung her hands, and ran into the farthest corner of the chamber and wept. And when the violence of this grief abated, she returned to the window; and opened the casement, and listened with an eager ear. All was silent—then a low murmuring rose from the multitude beyond the walls—again there was a sudden silence, and then she heard the fall of a heavy stroke. An awful moan followed, and the echoes that dwell in the abbey-craigs, and in the valley and the cliffs of Demiet, sul-

lenly responded to the sound. Then a dreadful voice made proclamation of some terrible event, but the tenour thereof she could not hear, nor was there any response.

The bell tolled again, and again there was silence, and a second stroke fell more heavily than the first, and the dreadful voice again made proclamation.

Again the bell tolled, and then there was a rushing sound as of parting waters, in the midst of which Sibilla heard the death-axe fall a third time; but when the voice of the executioner began again to make proclamation, a shriek so wild, so howling, and so full of sorrow, arose from the multitude, that she felt as if the very earth shuddered at the sound, and, swinging powerless from her hold, sank to the floor in a swoon.

CHAP. XXV.

The body of the Lord Walter, after his execution, had been carried to the abbey of Cambuskenneth to abide the King's pleasure; and when the sentence of the law had been fulfilled on the other ill-fated princes, the Earl of Athol came to his Majesty to confer with him concerning them.

"Their lives," replied the King, "have satisfied justice—see therefore, I pray you, that their remains are interred as befits their rank. It is not, however, meet that persons who die attainted in their blood and dignities should be allowed the pageantries of heraldry. Let them have honourable but private burial."

"In that," replied the Earl, "your Majesty wisely anticipates the opinion of your council; and, with permission, being myself

the nearest of their kin, I will attend as chief mourner."

The King abruptly raised his left hand from the table at which he was sitting, as if he had been startled by the proposal; but, suddenly subduing the surprise of the moment, he replied—

"No, my good uncle—that were too much, as you are now presumptive heir to the crown; for the life of the Lord James, not only as a partner in his father and his brother's treasons, but for his own rebellion in Lennox, stands doubly forfeited. For them you cannot grieve, for they have suffered justly,—albeit pity sued earnestly for them, especially for poor old Lennox.—It becomes not, therefore, the State, in any of its members, to seem to mourn for them. Princes in their dignity should have no respect to kin. But so far you may shew sufficient sympathy for our ill-fated cousins, by bearing yourself my command to the Abbot of Cambusken-

neth, to the end that with his brethren he perform the obsequies to-night, as if he knew only of the rank, and nothing of the offence, of the deceased."

The Earl had been so overtaken by the quickness of the King's amaze at his suggestion, that he stood somewhat rebuked while his Majesty was speaking; in so much, that the King thinking his command to the Abbot of Cambuskenneth was deemed not enough to ensure a becoming pageant, added—

"The world, my Lord, can expect no more from me. I would have them interred as Christian men of noble birth, not remembering they are executed traitors; but I cannot consent that their funeral should bear the ostentation which belongs to unattainted princes."

"I beseech your Majesty," said the Earl, "to permit some other messenger to bear your orders to the Abbot; for, as in your wisdom your majesty has discerned that I

should not appear in the ceremony, I hope it may stand with your pleasure to spare me also from that duty."

The King mused for the space of a minute, and then replied—

"I lay my command upon you in order to shew the Abbot how much I shall expect of his house.—But even now you would have undertaken to be chief mourner?"—

The Earl bowed, and saying, "It shall be as your Majesty desires," retired, and went forthwith to the abbey, whither the bodies had in the meantime been carried. And according as the King had desired and expected, the Abbot ordered a wide grave to be prepared in front of the altar of the abbey-church, in which, at midnight, with many chants and holy requiems, the interment was performed.

At the conclusion of the solemnity, the Earl of Athol, who had remained a spectator, left the church to return to the abbey-gate,

where his horse and servants were in attendance. In passing over the tombs and graves which lay in his way, he stopped unconsciously, and looked up to the calm and cloudless moon, that in her loneliness seemed as it were the visible and embodied beauty of tranquillity and silence. But almost in the same instant a cold and skinny hand took firmly hold of his, and on hastily looking round, he beheld the charnel-house visage of the Spaewife at his shoulder.

"What think you now, my Lord Athol?" said Anniple,—"did na I tell you, that after five burials ye would be a crowned king, and this night there has been four of them? When King James is dead ye'll wear the crown; but I wish you meikle gude o't, for ye have na pay't me yet for that grand spaeing."

The Earl, on seeing who it was that had seized his hand so familiarly, said—

"Why, Anniple, you do not reckon well; the five funerals have all been performed,—

the Regent Robert's long ago, and the four we have this night seen."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Spaewife, "do ye keep count?"

The Earl shuddered from head to foot at the searching glance with which she thus penetrated the secret abysses of his spirit. In a moment, however, he recovered his self-possession, and the fantastical creature began to chatter her teeth, and to chuckle with expectation, holding out her hand, saying—"But a gift, a grace, and a grant, my Lord—one, two, and three."

"There, take that and begone," replied the Earl, giving her a piece of money.

"This is an almous, but no pay."

"But," said Athol, and he looked apprehensively around, "you must tell me seriously who is to succeed King James?"

Anniple started back at the question, and raised her hand flutteringly for a moment, as if to admonish him. Suddenly, however, re-

collecting herself, she again held out her hand, saying—"Have na I told you, long ago and syne, that ye're to be a crowned king, and yet ye grudge to pay me for the tidings, though ye have had this night four beheaded men in their bloody winding-sheets testifying, that, as sure as death is, it's a thing that shall be."

"Thou art an importunate beggar," replied the Earl, struggling to overcome the impression which her language had produced —"and I am surprised that you get admission at such a time of night to this place."

"It's a' the house I have, Lord Athol, since the wicked Bishop o' Dunblane gart his foul servitors rive down the bonny bower that I bigget mysel' between his kirk-yard and the wimpling burn. O, it was a blithe and a winsome place! the waters afore the door ran linking, and dancing, and swirling, and whirling, like blithe bairnies at their daffing. My douce baudrons lay on my lap singing

cuttycrumb frae dawn to dark—poor thing! it had but that ae sang to pleasure me; and true Tyke was like a brother.—The deil's dame will surely some day make kail o' the monk's carcass that ruggit the roofs and rafters frae my bower, and fell't wi' a rung my kind messen for biting his leg at the herrying; for nobody thrives that does ill to Anniple of Dunblane. So pay your debt, my Lord, and be an honest man; or"—

"What will you do?"

"I'll maybe spae a' your fortune."

The Earl flung his purse into her bosom, and hurried from the church-yard.

CHAP. XXVI.

While those terrible tragedies were acting at Stirling, the Duchess of Albany was removed, as a prisoner, from her pleasant inland palace at Falkland to the strong sea-warded fortalice of Tantallon. For it was thought by all men, that her high mindedness would not patiently suffer such an entire dilapidation of her house, but would prompt her to stir up the friends of her lord and her father to attempt some enterprise of rescue or intimidation. The apprehension, however, of the machinations and treasons in which they had been engaged lay heavy on her heart; and, instead of feeling the stern instigations of revenge, her majestic spirit was weighed down with the persuasion of their guilt; and amidst its fears and mourning, did homage to justice. Still she was not

bereft of all hope, but, trusting to the ties of kindred, she soothed herself with the notion that, whatever might be the issue of the trials, the King, out of respect for his own blood, would surely never suffer execution to follow. Sustained by this fond flattery, she preserved her equanimity; and even when the morning of the Lord Walter's trial came, she rose with a serene countenance, and only remained a little longer than she was wont at her orisons. Towards the evening, however, she became restless, and moved to and fro in her chamber, sometimes halting suddenly, at others pacing the floor with wild gestures and perturbed steps; and Leddy Glenjuckie, the only one of her gentlewomen who had been permitted to accompany her, albeit of a loquacious humour, was so touched with dread, when she beheld these outward symptoms of the inward anguish, that she sat apart ruminating in silence.

At her accustomed hour the Duchess re-

tired to her couch, but not to rest. She wondered that no news came from Stirling, and sometimes her wishes made her interpret this lack of tidings into an auspicious omen. In this state the solemn hours of the night passed away; but sleep came not to her tearful eyelids. At the grey dawn she was seen slowly pacing the battlements, casting many a wistful look towards the west, and ever and anon breathing the low sigh of sadness, as she saw, afar off, the brightening summit of the mountain, at the foot of which stood the towers of Falkland, that home which had been blithened by the innocency of her children, and which with them she was destined never to behold again.

All day she was, by fits, touched as it were with frenzy; still, in the midst of those fearful pangs, the fortitude of her spirit never departed; and when the tear was shed and the shock over, she appeared as august and serene, as if neither the alarms of a daughter,

a wife, nor a mother, had any dominion within her bosom. And she sat at the window of her chamber in the western tower, and beheld the sun set and the evening close, and the stars lighted up, and the moon arise, calmly awaiting the consummation of her fate. But still no messenger came; and still the hope that wrestled with her, and would fly away, she continued to detain with a fond and endearing struggle. At last, soon after midnight, the sound of a bugle-horn was heard at the gate. It made her start from her seat, with the intent of rushing to the warder's tower, to hear who at that time sought admission; but, ere she had half way passed across the floor, she checked her precipitation, and, returning sedately to her seat, desired her gentlewoman to order candles to be brought in; for, till that occurrence, she had all the evening remained without any other light than the moonbeams through the casement.

Scarcely had the menial in attendance placed the lights on the table, when the captain of the castle entered, and said that a Herald had arrived from Stirling, and demanded admission. The captain, though an austere old sworder, faultered as he delivered the message, and avoided her eyes.—

"Give him admittance; I have longed for his coming," exclaimed the Duchess rising hastily. "Let him come in—let him come in—whatever his tidings or his office may be."

The captain turned quickly round, and hastened out of the room. Her gentlewoman, who had observed his emotion, retired to a corner and sat down; but the Duchess continued standing.

After a brief interval the captain returned with the herald, who trembled exceedingly as he approached towards her with a letter in his hand. She saw the paper, and snatched it eagerly from him; but instanter the forti-

tude of her spirit recovered its firmness, and without breaking the seal she walked deliberately to the candle.

The herald, who had knelt down to present the letter at the moment when she took it from him, continued on the floor, and seemed wrapt with amazement when he beheld her open it, and peruse it without trepidation.

"It is all over now," said the Duchess, when she had read the fatal intelligence; "they have all suffered the sentence of the law." A slight flutter moved her kerchief as she said these words; but she laid the letter on the table, and turning to the herald, who had risen from his kneeling, she added with a struggling voice, "If they deserved to die, their doom was just. Sir, have you any other business here?"

The herald was unable to make any reply, but bowed, as one that is before the hallowed shrine of some glorious martyr, and retired,

followed by the captain, who seemed in haste to quit the room ; but, before leaving it, he turned round, and for a moment looked at Her Grace with scarcely less than religious reverence, and then hurried away.

The Duchess, till they were gone, moved not from the spot where she was standing near the table ; but when the door was shut, and none present but her gentlewoman, she raised her hands distractedly, and with the wildest note of desolate misery cried—"God help me !" and rushed into an inner room.

CHAP. XXVII.

It came to pass, some time after the dolorous events, whereof recital has been made, that the King summoned the States of the realm to Parliament at Perth, and thither repaired Sir Robert Græme, the fiercest adherent of the faction of the house of Albany. He grudged the frustration of his design for the deliverance of the Lord Walter from the Bass isle, as if it had been to himself an insolent taunt, or a galling injury; and his dread of the King's justice was as a spur to his revenge, in so much that he pondered by night and by day in what manner to ratify a resentment that blood only could quench. Yet, though thus borne onward to crime by the incitements of destiny, he was nevertheless deterred from immediate venge-

ance by considerations of interest; for even, in his wildest and worst passions, this remorseless conspirator ever had respect to his estate. It is true, that the trials and execution of the princes smote him with amazement, but it soon passed away, and like the violent flame that bursts forth after the brief damping of oil cast upon the fire, the fiend which possessed him raged fiercer than ever.

At Perth he met with many of the baronage, malcontent with the strict enforcement of the royal authority which hampered them in their feuds and forays, and their other hasty administrations of redress in their own specialities; and finding them in this mood, he began afar off to work upon their distempered minds.

"This method of rule," he was wont to say, "which King James has learnt from our old enemies the English—may not, in itself, I am free to acknowledge, be wrong; nay, I doubt not it accords passing well with the

humour of those for whom it was contrived—for with them charters and statutes have the authority of rights and justice—but it suits neither our usages nor the temperament of Scottish blood. The English, at any time, will rather seek another's help than serve themselves; and hence it is that they so tamely leave their wrongs to the adjudications of judges and juries. But it is the nature of every free and true-born Scot to do his own business; and accordingly, from the oldest times of the monarchy, our Kings have never had leave to meddle with the jurisdictions of the chiefs and barons. In verity, I should be glad to know how a travelling man of law, going from town to town, with a book under his arm like a pedlar, can see into the deservings of ill-doers so well as the Lord that lives among them, and knows their habit, and is familiar with their repute. By such jurisprudence, I grant that the act of wrong may be well enough sifted, but is it

justice that the doer thereof should only be punished for that particular act, however bad his forgone conduct may have been? For my part, I think the King's prerogative should be upheld in all things, but I do not discern why it is that he has been so ill-advised as to treat his nobles as if they were all alike, and take from us the sword, even in our own defences. When he may go to war with the English, or any other crown, shall we say to him he should not? and are not our chiefs and barons, with respect to one another, as free to act as Kings, who are but barons with a greater vassalage? However, not to speak of that which may be wrongously repeated to our prejudice, who can tell what will ensue by this new way of taking subsidies. I do not say that King James hath any ill intent in enriching his treasury by taxes; but if a King have money enough to keep sworders, independent of the service of his vassals, what man, of any degree, can

then brag of freedom, or call aught his own, whether the thing be life, limb, or land?"

By subtle discourses of this bearing, he so beguiled them to his will, that, in the end, they appointed him to remonstrate with the King against the inroads that were daily made on their ancient privileges.

"I shall not shrink in the task," said he; "but then you must be prepared to back my endeavour; for, I doubt not, the King will ill brook the representation, and we all know, if he call it treason, it is but another word for death. Now I am not a man that will be worried like a rabbit. I will stand to danger whatever it may be, and I care not what life may perish in defending my own. It is, therefore, needful to be prepared for the worst, and I should remind you, that the Earl of Athol, who has been always heart and hand with the King in this new-fangled governance, can never be a fit person to

name for the Regency, should our adventure come to that extremity."

Thus all things were duly concerted for executing, at the opening of Parliament, what had been in this manner determined; but, when the King appeared on the throne, Græme, transported with a sudden sting of ire and malevolence, forgot the policy he was pledged to follow, and, rushing upon his Majesty, cried aloud—

"I arrest you, Sir, in the name of the Three Estates of the realm here assembled; for as your people have sworn to obey you, so are you constrained, by an equal oath, to govern them according to their laws and customs." And in saying this, still grasping the King's arm, he turned round and said to the barons and prelates there present, "Is it not thus as I say?" But even those of his own faction were so struck with consternation at his rashness, and so awed by the serenity which the King preserved, that they had not heart

to give him any demonstration of encouragement.

"Take him to prison," said his Majesty calmly; and he was thereupon seized by the arms, and carried away, bitterly upbraiding the dastards for whom he had adventured so daringly. The business of the Session then proceeded, as if no such bold treason had been attempted; and, when it was ended, his Majesty, having retired to his closet, sent for the Earl of Athol to confer with him concerning the outrage.

"I can discover," said his Majesty when the Earl was come before him, "that the austerity of our impartial administration has galled many among you, else this audacious Sir Robert Græme would not have ventured to lay hands on the King in Parliament. Now, as the end of all government should be to cherish good-will among the subjects, there must be some lack of policy, if not of justice, in the rigour of our proceedings; there-

fore let us speedily redress the grievance. I will pardon Græme—for, by the bravery of his attempt, he matched himself, as it were, only with me, and since he was none seconded, I shall not let it be searched whether or no he had any abettors."

"It may perhaps be as your Majesty says; but an outrage so flagrant is beyond pardon. If, however, the mercifulness of your own gracious nature plead for him, surely it will be enough to let him have his life. The very least that can be meted to him is banishment, and the forfeiture of his estates."

"To so bold and bad a man as I have heard even you, my Lord, describe Sir Robert Græme, such a punishment would only be as a license and warrant to work mischief.—"

"It may be," replied the Earl, "that I have spoken of him in heat, for he has ever been the most turbulent of the Albany faction. But however that may have been, it is not to be thought, even though your Majesty be con-

tent to pardon the insulting treason done to yourself, that the States will overlook the breach of their own privileges.

The King remained for several minutes ruminating and silent, and then said—

"This affair troubles me. I cannot altogether pardon Græme without giving offence to many of the nobility; and yet he is a man of such a nature, or I mistake the indications of character, that any measure of punishment, however small, will become with him a motive for vengeance. I would either deal with him gently, or not spare him at all."

"If," replied the Earl, "such be your Majesty's sentiment, and you are not moved in the business by any consideration of your own, but only as the matter may effect the public weal, let the lesser punishment be tried. For whatever impression it may make on Græme himself, your royal clemency cannot fail to prove most salutary upon others. As I doubt not there are abettors of his treason,

who at this moment tremble for themselves, they will be glad to find their heads safe, by the leniency shown to him. Were he entirely pardoned, they would suspect it was done but to gain time till their whole plot was found out."

"There is something like reason in what you say, my Lord, and I will remit the matter into your hands; and yet, I know not how it is, but I am not satisfied in compromising any point of policy with such a daring offender as Sir Robert Græme." And, so saying, his Majesty retired to his chamber; and the Earl coming away through the cloister, met Bishop Wardlaw, to whom he rehearsed what had passed between him and the King, knowing that his Majesty would probably, of his own accord, tell him.

"I do almost lament," said the Bishop, "that your counsel in this case has prevailed; and yet I would not have the traitor pardoned, for I know him well. I know him by

a confession which he once made to me while he was yet a mere youth scarcely bearded. Confession did I call it? A braggery rather of crimes. The subtile adder has not more skill in finding venom to supply the malice of her bite, than that dreadful man in discovering fit means and instruments for his atrocious purposes."

The Earl made no answer to this, but seemed so thoughtful, that the religious prelate, recollecting his consanguinity to Græme, endeavoured to soften the harsh opinion which he had thus indignantly delivered.

"You are mistaken, my Lord Bishop," said the Earl, "I am not troubled by what you have told me; but I dread to think that a spirit so implacable should be set at large, goaded with the sense of punishment."

"It is not too late to have him brought to trial and condemned," said the Bishop.

The Earl gave a short shudder of revolt, as

it were, at this, but in a moment he replied sedately—

"Though I know Græme to be the most daring and dangerous man at this time within the realm of Scotland, yet it cannot stand with the King's honour to change in his purpose towards him. Banishment and the forfeiture of his goods is the sentence that will be executed."

"In advising that," said Bishop Wardlaw, "you have incurred a fearful responsibility."

To this the Earl made no answer; and the Bishop, discerning that what he had said caused displeasure, parted from him. Next day, when the States again assembled in Parliament, sentence was recorded against Græme as the Earl of Athol had suggested; but, instead of going into banishment, he was no sooner set free of custody than he retired into the wildest highlands, and gave himself up to wrath and revenge.

CHAP. XXVIII.

One evening, soon after the daring adventure of the traitor Græme, as the King was sitting alone in his closet, pondering of his royal trusts and the odure that his name might have with posterity, he called Sir William Chrichton, the chancellor, before him—a man richly endowed with wisdom,—grave, temperate, and yet withal of an urbane disposition, and said to him—

"There is a mission of charity, Sir William Chrichton, in which I would fain have the help of your good offices. The forlorn estate of that noble lady, the Duchess of Albany, is a thing that lies very sore upon me. Whatever were the faults and offences of her father, her husband, and her sons, verily she has had cause for great sorrow; and though Justice might not mitigate the

misfortunes that she hath borne, yet pity will constrain us to lighten to the utmost the grief wherein she sits so disconsolate. I pray you, therefore, Sir William, go to her, and not only set her free from Tantallon, but undertake from me to restore to her whatever she may desire of the lands and heritage of her family. I give all to your wisdom and discretion, to act and to do for me as you would wish to see done by one who would earn, without the abatement of any present duty, the guerdon of an honourable renown hereafter.*

Sir William Chrichton did not make any immediate response to this command, but remained thoughtful for some time; in so much, that the King added—

"I am grieved, Sir William, that you take time to consider of this compassionate matter. You do not think, in wishing to soften the rigorous adversity that afflicts the Duchess, I thereby manifest aught which the invidious

world might, in its malice or envy, impute to me as an acknowledgment of having done wrong?"

"No," replied the Chancellor; "far be from me the thought that your Majesty can be swayed in any good, or just, or kind intent, by the awe of those who look invidiously, even on the virtues of princes. But after the terrible task of justice which your Majesty has achieved, it is meet to be considered, whether the time for remission and indulgence be yet come. The Duchess of Albany is a lady famed for an august spirit and a masculine understanding; fit, it is said, for the rule and sovereignty of a kingdom. What has befallen her family cannot but have struck sharply and sorely into her heart; and of a necessity it would seem she must bear against your Majesty an ireful and implacable mind; for it is the very nature of ill fortune, to stir up those evil qualities in ourselves, which, but for adversity, might have slept unknown, like the

foul toad that lurks under the flower, and is not angered till the mower's scythe hath wounded his back. Moreover, your Majesty would do well to call to mind, that her outlawed son, the Lord James, still lives and threatens. What he might do were his mother reinstated even in no more than the earldom of her father, is a thing that requires the wisdom of all the council to consider; for what may be given to her will be given to him; and in him the enemy has been but disarmed,—his animosities burn as fiercely as ever,—and it were well to weigh the consequence of restoring to him any portion of his arms, even though it were no more than his dirk."

"I have thought of all that, Sir William; but we shall have done little for the peace of the realm, if we cannot venture to pity and relieve the sufferings of a poor widow. Truly, Sir William, it stands not with my honour, if, after such sacrifices, we may not do as we list in those humanities which all men must approve.

No: the safety of the state shall be maintained without respect to what may be done to lighten the condition of the Duchess of Albany. I do therefore again say, that you will do me a kind service by undertaking this mission."

Sir William seeing the King so bent, and having noted withal the greatness of his motives in whatsoever he was minded to do, made no farther controversy, but retired, and went forthwith to Tantallon. And when he was come thither, he was conducted to the chamber of the Duchess, who was much moved when she beheld him; but, without expressing any sentiment of the surprise wherewith she was agitated, she waved her hand, and pointing to a chair, invited him to be seated.

After the lapse of a short time, in which Sir William remained as if he had expected that she would inquire the object of his visit, he began to speak of the joyfulness with which he had received the King's commands, to as-

sure Her Grace of the good will that his Majesty bore towards her, and that he had already delivered his orders to the Constable to allow her to quit the castle.

"And whither shall I go?—who will venture to shelter one who is the daughter, the widow, and the mother of traitors? Alas! Sir William Chrichton, you have brought me no boon."

"But I am empowered to restore to you all the lands of Lennox that pertained to the Earl, your father."

"My father! oh, what have you done to that poor infirm old man?"

"I am farther authorised to say, that all the dignities and titles of honour, which you have derived from the Duke, your husband, shall be continued to you as heretofore."

"What! the titles! the style—as Duchess of Albany—as Duke Murdoch's wife?"

"Every thing, to the utmost pretext of heraldry."

The Duchess, as he said this, smiled; but with so much of sadness in her look, that the Chancellor was rebuked.

"Dignities and titles, Sir William," exclaimed the Duchess, "to the utmost pretext of heraldry! Verily the King is royally munificent. He will give me the titles I had with the Duke! Wife was one of them—will he restore that? Mother! I was that too, Sir William Chrichton! Where is my princely Walter, and my warm free-hearted Alexander?

"Alas!" cried the Chancellor, "that I should have so marred the King's kindness."

"The King's kindness," cried the Duchess with a withering look! "Oh! who could utter such a word to me? My old grey-headed father, my husband, my sons,—where are they all? The King's kindness—Oh, Sir William Chrichton! when first I but tried to call that kindness by the name of justice, the mingled feelings of the daughter, wife, and mother, revolted at the endeavour."

For some time the Chancellor stood appalled, and pierced to the heart; but, when the vehemence of her grief had somewhat abated, he again protested his sorrow for having so unwittingly touched her wounds, and then he began to speak of the business on which he had come, soliciting to know what answer he should bear to the King.

"Tell him that, when you offered me the lands of Lennox, I wept for my father;—when you promised me the restoration of the dignities that belonged to me as a wife, I asked for my husband;—and when you told me of his kindness.—Kindness! oh, where are all my children? Kindness! Herod in his jealousy slew but peevish infants—mine were princely men. When the angry Heavens punished guilty Egypt, only the first-born were slain, and daughters and mothers there had fathers and husbands left to share their sorrow; but all are taken from me!—I think, Sir William Chrichton that I could have will-

ingly parted with one to have redeemed the others; but, oh! to take them all!—with one stroke to fell all my flourishing grove!—the merciless thunderbolt is satisfied with a single tree! But surely I am made of some insensative element, that I survive such desolation, and hear of kindness. Niobe, that lost but her children, wept herself to stone!—O! Murdoch, Murdoch! had I been that true wife which I was once accounted, I should have gone with thee to prison. No chiding for those fond errors, which have proved the ruin of our gallant boys, would then have escaped my lips. But I would have taken thy head upon my lap, and soothed thee to sleep, and shed no tear, neither for son nor father, till that was done. Methinks it would have been a far easier endurance than what I now suffer, to have listened to the knelling of their fatal bell, and to have gone with them to the scaffold, and seen the dreadful preparations!—for then, as the first axe lightened in the air,

surely sweet death would have closed my eyes, and I should never have heard it fall."

Sir William Chrichton, who had for some time struggled to suppress the anguish of sympathy which he felt for her measureless sorrow, could no longer withstand these woeful lamentings, but hastily quitting the room, left the castle without completing the task of his mission.

END OF VOLUME I.

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